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**Enhancing the reading conditions in a
multilingual grade six class: Exploring the
possibilities.**

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requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of
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CALLSSA

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work.

Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

Signature:

____ Date: 14 June 2004

FOREWORD

This dissertation has been a long and difficult journey, which I would like to compare with a journey on a ship. The journey lasted longer than expected and often I thought of abandoning the ship when it was heading towards a severe storm, but I kept going and hoping that after this storm my destination would be nearer. The last difficult period brought me finally around “The Cape of Good Hope” and then I just knew, here I am, I survived!

Every storm I had to go through, I was not alone. The people who were with me on board supported me through thick and thin and helped me to end this journey safely. Herewith, I would like to thank them.

First of all, I would like to thank all the learners of the grade six class and their teacher. They were only on this journey for the period I spent in the “field”, but nevertheless they were very supportive and co-operative while I was there. I wish them all the best for the future. I also thank their teacher, because she gave me the permission to do my research in her class. I hope she is still in the educational environment, because she is a very creative and hardworking teacher. Wherever she may be, I hope she will be supported and respected by the people around her. I should not forget to thank the principal and staff who welcomed me in their school.

I would like to thank my husband and my son who were with me on this journey. I thank my husband for his support and courage to carry me through the storms. As my son was born just before my research, I had to take him to the classroom and he became the youngest grade six learner.

I need to thank the people who helped me to keep up the structure of the ship (my dissertation) and therefore I would like to thank my supervisor, Jean Baxen for all the time she spent on reading, writing and re-reading. I would like to thank both Jean and Kay McCormick for their time, good advice, patience, support and encouragement.

Finally, there are some people who were not physically with me on this journey. They stayed where my journey began, but it does not mean they encouraged me less; on the contrary they were there when I needed them. Those people are my family and my best friends. They were there and they gave me the necessary support and motivation to continue this long journey.

I might have forgotten someone, but I thank everybody who was involved in this project and they should know that without all of them this dissertation would have been impossible.

ABSTRACT

The qualitative study described in this research addresses the question of “how to enhance reading conditions in a grade six class with learners from different language backgrounds, but taught in English as a medium of instruction”. The conceptual framework helps to carve a path through the maze of definitions about reading, independent readers, reading models and Cambourne’s reading conditions, which were the focus of the research.

The grade six classroom, in which the reading conditions, mainly “immersion” and “engagement”, were to be enhanced, consisted of 42 learners and one teacher. The observation period started in February 2002, but the actual research described in this dissertation lasted two months (August and September 2002), and happened in different phases: the initial phase and the main research period. The latter was made up of the intervention and the final phase.

In the initial phase the reading conditions in the classroom layout, the learners’ profile, the teaching practices and the attitudes towards reading were explored through observations, field notes and interviews. Other qualitative data was gathered using a reading survey and a cloze procedure test, which were both developed by the researcher. The collected data helped to set up the intervention, in which several challenges had to be faced.

During that intervention the physical conditions in the classroom were enhanced to create an encouraging and comfortable space for the learner-reader. A wide variety of interesting and relevant books were brought in the classroom in order to make it a literacy rich environment. At the same time, organising activities based on prediction and sequencing studied the learners’ meaning making process. These activities were created to stimulate the learners’ engagement in reading. In the final phase possible changes in reading engagement and attitudes were registered through the same cloze procedure test and a second reading survey.

Significant results of the research showed that reading became a social experience, an interaction between learners and teacher, in an environment where learners read for pleasure.

Even though the intervention took place over a short period of two weeks, the results indicate that there are ways in which teachers can enhance reading conditions and a stimulating environment can be created to engage learners in reading.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

As a sociolinguist, my interest in languages and people took me from the University of Ghent to Cape Town. Disguised as a tourist, visiting many places, one museum stood out, the District Six museum. The exhibited material was not different, maybe it was recognizable, but the atmosphere was different. The two-dimensional pictures on the museum walls and the audio-recorded voices talked to me and told me the stories of people who lived in this cosmopolitan heart of Cape Town, before they were forcibly removed from the District six area by the Apartheid government. These stories, told by the people themselves were so different from the history described in many books I had read, because they were “real” people with “real” stories.

Why did I find this museum so special? Why did the stories keep wandering through my mind? A few days later, I found the answer. The history of District Six embraced two of my main interests, the relationships between “people” and “languages”. After speaking to several people about this amazing oral archive, I realised that I definitely wanted to know more about the interrelationship between multilingual aspects of the District Six area and the people who lived in that area.

My interest as a research topic was still too broad because most information on District six was related to the multilingual character of the area and of course the people. Therefore I decided to bring my topic down to multilingualism and children within an educational setting. I opted to focus on one school in the area, which has deep roots in the District Six history.

During my first visit to the school¹, I met the principal and had a short conversation with him about the school, the learners and the community in which the school is based. It was mainly the multilingual aspects of the school and the community that stimulated my interest and curiosity.

A few months later, having gained the consent and co-operation of the school principal to whom I had explained my idea of observing learners regarding the language use in the classroom, I introduced myself to the learners and the teachers². Initially, I spent time with the grade five teacher and his learners because he showed an interest in my research. When the 2002 school year started, I moved with the

¹ May 2001

² November – December 2001

grade five learners to grade six as they were comfortable in my presence and I wanted to follow their progress. I had also identified the grade six teacher as a remarkable and enthusiastic teacher who was very keen on working with me.

The original focus of my research to “observe learners’ language use in the classroom” was put aside when I became aware of learners’ poor reading skills through my observations in 2001 and February-May 2002. This problem appeared during their examinations³. I noticed that they struggled to understand exam questions, which of course had an influence on their responses in all subjects. Further I discovered that little time was spent on reading, partly because there seemed to be insufficient resources available.

It would seem that in higher grades learners are assumed to have “mastered” reading skills taught in the foundation phase, therefore reading is not a key focus. Teachers, it would seem, assume that learners enter the Intermediate Phase with reading competencies that will enable them to meet the demands of this phase.

The process of reading in the classroom where I conducted my research was made more difficult through the learners’ different language backgrounds. For these learners, multilingualism is an everyday reality. While eleven official languages have been recognized since 1994, most of which have a variety of dialects, these languages do not necessarily find expression as languages of learning in many classrooms. Linguists might consider this situation as a fascinating and interesting setting for research, but it puts a lot of South African children into difficult positions, especially in educational institutions.

Through my early observations in the school, I noticed that the children spoke different languages in different contexts. For example, they were supposed to speak English, although it seemed that some learners (especially the ones from the surrounding community) as well as the teacher would use a mix of Afrikaans and English in the classroom. For most learners English was not the language they used at home, in the community or even on the playground. Instead they would speak a mixture of Afrikaans and English, Afrikaans or Xhosa with their friends. In addition, most learners also struggled to read and write in their own mother tongue. They were taught in English, which was their second or even third language. Even though English is not the home language, it would seem that the parents and learners

³ December 2001

preferred English as the language of teaching and learning, because it was perceived as the key to information, success, work and the outside world⁴.

During my early observations, I observed several problems regarding reading. It seemed that little time was spent on reading. One of the difficulties seemed to be the absence of opportunities to read. There also seemed to be few resources available to stimulate learners to read and the classroom environment did not seem conducive. It was at this point that I developed a clearer focus and began to develop a research question.

Therefore, the aim of my study was to explore some ways of enhancing the reading conditions in a grade six class, where learners are taught in English, as a medium of instruction which is not their mother tongue. The main question drawn from this aim was: “What are some of the reading conditions that would facilitate more and better reading in a grade six multilingual class?” The supporting questions that would enable me to gain a deeper understanding or insight into my research question included:

- What are the existing reading conditions?
- How conducive is the current reading environment?
- What are the learners’ attitudes towards reading?
- What are the learners’ interests and reading habits?
- What is the teacher’s attitude towards reading?
- What are the current reading practices, including reading strategies and encouragement of reading organised by the teacher?
- What are the reading levels of the grade six learners?

1.2 Summary of the chapters

In the introduction, I summarise my background, I introduce the school where the research took place and the reason why I did this research. I also try to trace back how my research topic evolved and was finally established. I make clear the aim of my study. In this first introductory chapter, I give a summary of the subsequent chapters.

In the second chapter, I elaborate on the theoretical aspects of my study and describe the conceptual framework which supports it. I summarise the existing

⁴ This was told to me by the grade five and six teacher and the headmaster during informal conversations.

reading definitions to establish a working definition of reading which is then put in a broader context of language development in children. This is linked with learning in a multilingual environment and how the process of reading is understood as a meaning making activity. I consider theories about different aspects of reading (e.g. models, what independent readers do) and what facilitates it in general, but also in multilingual environments, in particular. The emphasis of this chapter is mainly to provide a theoretical framework to understand reading and its enhancement in general but with an emphasis on multilingual settings. The final paragraphs of this chapter are dedicated to positioning my study in relation to existing research on reading within a South African context.

The third chapter outlines the research design. I explain the methodology chosen for this study. I describe the different factors that played an important role in my research and have had an influence on the interpretation of my results. These aspects include the site, the sample of learners, the different methods used in the three phases of the study and my position as researcher. This chapter also incorporates an explanation of how the complete research unfolded in the school. It then identifies the textual analysis process based on discourse analysis. I include ethical consideration and also provide a framework in which I position myself as the researcher.

The two pillars of the research: conceptual framework and research design having been established, chapter four focuses on the results of the fieldwork. This chapter covers the three phases of my research: the initial phase, the intervention and the final phase. The first section of this chapter outlines the challenges that had to be faced to enhance the reading conditions during the intervention. The data that were collected during the initial phase of the study are used to analyse the existing reading conditions. The second section gives a description of the main research period, which consists of the intervention and the final phase. In this section, the activities used to enhance the reading conditions are outlined. In the third section, the findings that were recorded during the intervention and the final phase are analysed together with the results of the initial phase. The main findings are categorized according to themes that emerged in the fieldwork.

In chapter five the results described in the previous chapter are further interpreted in the light of the conceptual framework to see how congruent they are with it, and in order to judge the success of the intervention aimed at enhancing reading.

Finally, in the sixth chapter, I make suggestions as to how teachers can use the results of my research in their classrooms. In addition I recommend what new reading research would be relevant and extremely useful to the South African context.

University of Cape Town

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into two sections. The first part deals with literature that helped to generate the conceptual framework which forms the basis of my study. It includes a short summary of different definitions of reading, which are then put in the broader context of language development and second language learning. The central section of this chapter focuses on understanding what independent readers do, on reading models and on reading conditions. This framework was vital in guiding me through the research design, data collection and the analysis and interpretation of my results.

In the second part of this chapter I look at reading research related to my study, with the view to positioning my research and the possible contribution of my research in a South African context.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 *Defining reading*

According to Weaver (1994) and Smith (1985) reading definitions fall into two main categories. The first category focuses on reading correctly by identifying words (skill-centred approach) and the second category emphasizes reading as constructing meaning from a text in a context (meaning and text centred approach).

Theorists belonging to the first major category broadly define reading as “getting meaning from certain combinations of letters” (Flesch, 1955: 10, 31 in Weaver, 1994: 9). According to these theorists, we teach learners letters they combine into words, words into sentences and then they can read and make meaning. So, in this conception, reading is a precise process. It involves exact, detailed, sequential perception and identification of letters, words, spelling patterns and larger language units (Goodman, 1967: 126 in Weaver, 1994: 9).

Another group of theorists, the structural linguists, conceive of reading as turning the visual stimulus of written language back into speech (Strickland, 1964: 10, 13-14 in Weaver, 1994: 9). Within this group, a subgroup suggests that meaning is in the sounds of language, and accordingly, we want to equip the children to turn the written word into a spoken word, claiming that they will hear what it says and thus, get its meaning (Walcutt & McCracken, 1975: xiv in Weaver, 1994: 9).

The second category of theories considers reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game (Goodman, 1967: 127 in Weaver, 1994: 10). It involves interaction

between thought and language. Efficient reading, according to this group does not result from precise identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time (Goodman, 1967: 127 in Weaver, 1994: 10). In this case “getting meaning” from a text is a priority. Reading is the active process of reconstructing meaning from language represented by graphic symbols, just as listening is the active process of reconstructing meaning from the sound symbols of oral language (Smith, Goodman & Meredith, 1970: 247 in Weaver, 1994: 10). Prior knowledge (past experience) plays an important role in the reading process and the reader brings this knowledge to the text (Rosenblatt, 1978: 12 in Weaver, 1994: 10).

According to Goodman (1996) and Cambourne (1988) reading means comprehension. For this to occur, readers must first construct a meaningful message inside their heads. The effectiveness of reading thus becomes a function of the degree to which the meanings in the text constructed by the reader match the meanings which the author of the text intended. The higher the degree of similarity of meaning between the two texts, the more effective the reading has been. This does not mean that the reader must understand exactly and precisely what the author of the text originally intended (Cambourne, 1988: 158 and Goodman, 1996: 2-3). Reading is a process by which the learner can extract a sequence of cues from printed texts and relate these, one to another, so that she/he understands the precise message of the text. The learners continue to gain in this skill throughout their entire education, interpreting statements of ever-increasing complexity (Clay, 1972: 8).

This meaning-making process goes hand in hand with the idea of reading as enjoyment. Coles states that, “reading is not an instrumental activity, but a recreational, imaginative experience which engages the reader at an affective and cognitive level” (1998: 4).

Reading is a transaction between the reader and the text in a given situational context, as an event in which meaning occurs (Weaver, 1994: 16, 19, 27). “Reading means bringing meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it...learning to read means learning to bring meaning to a text in order to construct meaning.” (Weaver, 1994: 42)

The two approaches described above differ fundamentally because the first category focuses on reading as a skill emphasising “getting it right”, whereas the second approach views reading as a meaning making process, which is dynamic, life-

long and takes place in a meaningful and natural context. During this process there is an interaction between reader and text (Flanagan, 1995: 3). I consider this second approach as more valuable as educators working within it would give learners more opportunities to become independent readers.

Before exploring further aspects of reading, I would like to investigate the importance of reading in a broader context of language development and second language environments.

2.1.2 Understanding language development

In order to understand what happens in the process of language development, Vygotsky's (1978) theory is helpful. It can be explained with regard to three major themes.

The first theme concerns language as a social activity. The social interaction in the process of learning plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition as Vygotsky (1978: 57) sees it:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

The community in which the child grows up plays an important role in the development of language, because all cognitive skills are practised in that social environment in which the individual grows up. In part, the society surrounding the child and the child's personal history will determine the way in which the individual thinks (Schütz, 2002: www.sk.com.br/sk-vygot.html).

The social environment stressed in Vygotsky's theory, is an important aspect, especially in a second language environment. So, the development of reading cannot be seen simply as a skill taught in the classroom. It is an activity interrelated with social and cultural processes whereby the community influences the development of language, especially in a second language environment.

The second theme in Vygotsky's theory about the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) stresses the potential of the child. He explains it as follows:

the distance between the child's 'actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving' and the higher level of 'potential development as determined through problem solving' under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978: 86, 'emphasis in original')

In relation to reading, this means that a child is able to perform certain reading activities on his/her own, which Vygotsky refers to as "actual development", the current status of the child's development. Other reading activities are still too difficult and the child will not be able to solve the problem on its own. If we want the child to reach his/her full potential, it is vital to find the right reading task. Therefore the current reading level of the child needs to be detected and then the new task should be made a little bit more difficult. If we make the task too difficult the child will be left frustrated. At the same time the task should not be too easy as this will result in the child being bored. Both situations will lead to unwillingness to read. If the new reading activity is organised in such a way that it becomes challenging for the learner, he/she will be able finish the activity successfully, and this results in eagerness to continue reading for pleasure.

In the third theme, Vygotsky (1978: 57) stresses the importance of the need for assistance in order for the learners to reach his/her potential. This assistance can be offered and given by the teacher or another capable person who would be able to assist the learner. At the same time learners need to be encouraged to ask for assistance if they need help, otherwise they will become frustrated.

The need for assistance starts from the beginning in the reading process, because children need others to read for them and to them until they are able to read themselves (Smith, 1985: 127). As previously mentioned, learning is a social process (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 23 and Heath, 1983:157), because it seems that children learn faster when they interact with people in their environment. I would like to stress that people who can provide appropriate assistance are not only caretakers or teachers, but also their peers. Vygotsky (1978: 57) stated that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition and in learning a second language, because learning a second language through interaction with peers or adults takes place for communicative purposes.

It seems that "social" and "interaction" are the key words in the three themes. Therefore I can conclude that learning, and particularly learning to read, are

interactive and social processes in which the protagonists are the learners and their “mentors” (teachers, caretakers or peers).

Vygotsky’s concept of learning as a social and interactive activity plays an important role in the rest of my conceptual framework, because it supports the view that reading is more than just a skill that can be taught through rules; that it is a meaning making dynamic, social and interactive process. Vygotsky’s theory put this view in a broader context of learning and language development.

Vygotsky’s theory does not specifically deal with second language environments. Therefore I would like to explain Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition and learning. It is congruent with Vygotsky’s regarding learning as a social activity.

2.1.3 Understanding the second language environment

In order to understand the impact of Vygotsky’s language development theory in relation to second language environments, the distinction between the “acquisition” and the “learning” of language needs to be made clear. Krashen (1987) describes two independent systems of second language performance: the acquired system and the learned system. The first system that he describes is the acquired system or language acquisition which is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children are involved in when they acquire their first language. “Language acquisition” may also be referred to as “implicit learning”, “informal learning”, “natural learning” or “picking up language”.

Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. (Krashen, 2002: www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html)

The second system, “language learning” is defined as a conscious process of building up knowledge of a second language. The rules of the language are learned and the learner is aware of them (Krashen, 1987: 10). The learned system or learning is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge about the language, e.g. knowledge of grammar rules (Krashen, 2002: www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html). Learning is a conscious engagement, which requires conditions that facilitate and enhance its happening, as it is restricted

to rules that are easily learned and applied, and not yet acquired. (Krashen, 1997: <http://aelvis.ael.org/eric/digests/edorc968.htm>)

Similar to Vygotsky's idea that guidance is needed in the process of language development (to reach a higher level of development), Krashen states that especially during the process of "learning", the learner needs an assistant (e.g. teacher, parent, adult), who acts in the planning, the editing and the correcting of the language. In the development of second language speaking, the assistant's role is to correct and give speech a more polished appearance. Learners can reach that higher level of development if they are guided in an appropriate way (Reid, 2000: <http://languageimpact.com/articles/rw/krashenbk.htm>).

Another aspect of this theory that needs consideration is what Krashen refers to as "input-hypothesis". In this regard, learners need to be provided with enough comprehensible, interesting and relevant input in the classroom environment. Especially, second language learners should be given the opportunity to read material that is relevant to them from the beginning of their reading development in a second language. In that way they can begin to understand the second language used in real situations and become proficient in that language.

In second language environments, it is important to be aware of the contrast between language learning and language acquisition as Krashen (1987 in Weaver, 1994: 65) suggests, because this awareness has implications for second language learners and learning. The first language speaker "acquires" language competences, whereas second language learners in that same language environment need to be taught certain structures of language to grow their conscious knowledge of the second language. When it comes to language learning, the authenticity of the environment and the affinity among its participants are vital elements to make the learner feel part of this environment. These elements are rarely predominant in conventional classrooms (Reid, 2000: <http://languageimpact.com/articles/rw/krashenbk.htm>)

For my study, the importance of the distinction between "acquiring" and "learning" becomes clear, when we take into account the learners who have to function as "acquirers of second language". At the school the medium of instruction is English and for the majority of the learners this is not their mother tongue. So, most learners were not only learning English as a second language, but they were also learning other subjects through English which is the medium of instruction. In such a

case, the problem becomes more acute when learners are expected to learn subjects through the medium of English.

Krashen makes an important point that a good basic knowledge of the first language has positive influence on learning additional languages. It is easier to read in a language one already knows. He argues “if learners understand the reading process in one language, they will be able to utilize it in other languages.” Research evidence suggests that advanced first language development has cognitive advantages. (Krashen, 1997: <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/focus/focus3.htm>) So, if learners never had the chance to be taught at school in their mother tongue and they never learned to read at an appropriate level in English during the foundation phase⁵, it will be very difficult for them to catch up later in the higher grades. In the intermediate phase⁶, less specific attention is given to learning to read or developing reading skills. Learners who fall behind will fall further and further behind and become frustrated, because they are not able to read independently.

In conclusion, we can state that both Vygotsky and Krashen stress the importance of learning as a social activity. The protagonists in the interactive process of reading are the learners and their “mentors”. In a second language environment the learners will be more aware of the processes of language development due to the nature of the approach as Krashen states. Indeed, the learners are not “acquiring” the language (as in monolingual environments), but need to “learn” which means that the process happens consciously.

In this part of the chapter I have thus far dealt with reading definitions, with the challenges these bring, and with theories about language development and second language learning, within which reading takes place. In the next part of this chapter I will look at the actual process of reading in greater detail. This means I will investigate the features of an independent reader, reading models and the reading conditions.

⁵ Foundation phase includes grades one to three.

⁶ Intermediate phase are grades four to six.

2.1.4 *Understanding what “independent” readers do*

It is very interesting and useful to find out how independent readers read, because in that way we can help less proficient readers with their reading development. How are independent readers able to read successfully?

Smith defines an independent reader as a person who reads for comprehension (1985: 33 & Cambourne, 1988: 158). This kind of reader is not only concerned with identifying letters or words, but is concentrating on getting the whole meaning of the text (Weaver, 1994: 18 & Flanagan, 1995: 7). According to Smith this is the only way to become an independent reader (1985: 40). Less proficient readers try to read every single word correctly, but while they read in that way, they do not achieve a good understanding of the whole text (Smith, 1985: 33). They put so much effort into reading the words correctly that they tend to not achieve the meaning of the entire text.

The first feature of independent reading is selective reading in the process of making meaning. In this process the reader makes use of both non-visual and visual information (Smith, 1985: 16), which is analogous to deep and surface as defined by Chomsky (1965 in Weaver, 1994: 37). The surface structure or the visual information is the visible or audible text that can be interpreted as words and word patterns. The deep structure or non-visual information contains underlying relationships that are constructed by the reader on the basis of his or her prior knowledge and experience (Weaver, 1994: 38). The actual text (print) in front of the reader holds visual information, while non-visual information comprises the reader's grasp of language, familiarity with the subject of the text and general ability to read. It goes beyond the visual information. Independent readers will use the relevant non-visual information and will need less visual information in the reading process (Smith, 1985: 33). They will concentrate more on the underlying relationships between words and sentences and even rely on prior knowledge, which is the second feature of independent reading.

Independent readers also make maximum use of their prior knowledge and depend as little as possible on the information in front of their eyes, which is the visual information (Smith, 1985: 16). Weaver describes prior knowledge/experience (deep structure) as schemas (1994: 38). These schemas make clear that there is a relationship between the language and the meaning of text and the learner's own experiences and knowledge. This relationship is what learners need, because it makes printed material predictable and in that way the learners will be able to make informed

guesses while reading. The more the reading reflects meaningful language use, the more independently the readers apply their knowledge to construct meaning (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 10).

The use of these schemas can be seen as reliant on predictability, which is a third feature of independent reading. Through the use of the available information, the reader takes a look at the text, trying to have an idea of what it is about. The reader looks at the surface features of the text and tries to detect information from pictures, non-alphabetic symbols, colour and the design of the text, and through this activity, tries to find the meaning of the text. Answering self-posed questions and making predictions are strategies which imply that the more the reader knows, the more likely the predictions (schemas) will match with the actual text (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 3-5). The more information readers filter while reading, the more appropriate their interaction will be with the text and the better they will read independently (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 7-8).

Language cueing systems described by Weaver (1994: 42) are the fourth feature of independent reading. The graphophonic language cueing system is the first system and refers to the symbol systems of oral and written language (1994: 42). The system of sound (phonology), intonation, stress on syllables and words, pitch variation and the orthographic system are together called “phonics”. This cueing system helps learners to understand the complex relationship between how people talk and how language is organised in written text (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 10-11). The second cueing system works on a syntactic level in which the relationship between words, sentences, paragraphs, word order, tense, number and gender is important. This process provides cues for readers, because the syntax can be used to predict and to confirm predictions while they are reading (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 11-12). The third language cueing system is described by Weaver as the “semantic and pragmatic” system, where the reader focuses on the relationship between language and meaning, taking the social, cultural and historical context of language use into consideration (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 13-14). The independent reader focuses on using the syntactic level and using smaller parts of the language to make sense of the text. The independent reader will try to understand the bigger picture instead of focusing on words and syllables.

Making informed guesses using the context is the fifth feature of independent reading described in Smith (1985: 62). Independent readers will guess the meaning of

an unknown word in a text, because they recognize the context. This context is extremely important as it plays a role in predicting or recognizing meaning, because the reading process is a transaction between the reader and the text. That is why context is so important for non-proficient readers, because they might be able to read words better in context than in isolation. Independent readers use context automatically and efficiently to reduce their reliance on visual cues and graphophonemic knowledge (Weaver, 1994: 135). If comprehension is necessary before words can be identified, and if the purpose of reading is to make sense of the text, then there is often little point in identifying the individual words in isolation. Meaningful language is transparent; we look through the words for the meaning beyond. Context makes meanings and words become transparent (Smith, 1985: 111, 123). While reading we use our personal context of knowledge and experience and we also use aspects of the situational and sociolinguistic context.

While five features of what independent readers do are described separately, an independent reader will never use these reading strategies in isolation. These features are intertwined and interrelated in the process of independent reading. When we know what independent readers do, we can start planning learning environments that enhance reading development.

Before considering how to enhance the reading conditions, it is essential to reflect on the existing approaches to reading which are represented by two different reading models. These models have been developed to explain the reading process.

2.1.5 *Reading Models*

The two kinds of reading definitions (skill-centred and meaning-centred) described by Weaver (1994) and Smith (1985) (see 2.1.1 *Defining reading*) are also reflected in the two main models or approaches to reading. Weaver refers to the first model as the commonsense or transmission model. This model is also referred to as the behaviourist approach by Flanagan (1995). The second model is defined by Weaver as the transactional model and by Flanagan as the socio-psycholinguistic approach. While Weaver (1994) and Flanagan (1995) may use different terminologies, the two theorists agree regarding the principles outlined in each model. Table 2.1 below highlights the major features of each model.

Commonsense or Transmission Model (Weaver) or Behaviourist Model (Flanagan)	Transactional Model (Weaver) or Socio-psycholinguistic Approach (Flanagan)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Reading proceeds from part to whole (letter to words to sentences)-Reading proceeds from surface to deep structure (from what is on the page to the knowledge that is in the mind).-Reading proceeds from the outside in (another way of saying from text to reader).-Emphasis on phonics and grammar and the focus is on individual letters (reading as a translation process). So, the reader will learn the technical skills of written language before the comprehension-There is a very strong focus on reading aloud-Reading is a one-way activity (text information goes to reader)-Learning to read is a linear process with a beginning and an end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Reading proceeds from part to whole, and vice versa.-Reading proceeds not only from surface to deep structure, but also from deep to surface.-Reading proceeds not only from the outside in, but also from the inside out-The emphasis is on using all the skills at the same time in order to make meaning, which is the aim of the reading process.-Silent reading is essential for reflection, comprehension together with discussing the books-Independent reading means bringing prior knowledge to the text, predict (guessing what comes next), and interrogating the text.-Learning to read is a circular process. People learn reading throughout their lives, and there is no end point.

2.1 Reading models

The first reading model, which is called the Commonsense model or Transmission model by Weaver (1994) or the Behaviourist approach to reading and language comprehension by Flanagan (1995), suggests that we read and comprehend by working from smaller parts to increasingly larger parts. In this model, the entry point begins with sounding out words and identifying them. This is followed by combining the meanings of individual words to get the meaning of a sentence, through combining the meanings of sentences to get the meaning of the whole text. This is a part-to-whole approach, starting to learn to read parts (letters, words) moving to the whole text. It is also known as the bottom-up approach.

As Flanagan (1995: 12-15) states, in a behaviourist classroom the learning focuses on phonics and the recognition of words and the learners are measured against some kind of norm or standard. In this model there is a great concern to get the rules

right before the reader is able to make meaning (Weaver, 1994: 87). As such, language is processed from surface structure to deep, from outside in. So, the meaning comes from the text to the reader (Weaver, 1994: 41-42). In this approach text carries only one meaning, which the reader is required to reproduce. There is little interaction between text and reader.

The fundamental goal of this bottom-up model is to get the words, rules and structures right first through a hierarchically structured skills approach, where meaning is only established after mastering all the sub-skills.

The second model is defined as the Transactional model (Weaver, 1994: 87) or as the Psycho-linguistic approach (Flanagan, 1995: 12). This approach focuses on the meaning of the whole text as a key goal for reading. To these theorists, making meaning is at the heart of the reading activity. The socio-psycholinguistic approach to reading emphasizes the construction of meaning. Sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic research confirms that reading is a matter of whole-to-part, top-to-bottom, deep-to-surface, inside out processing. It is the reader's schemas, expectations and reading strategies that determine how the parts will be perceived and what meanings will be assigned to them. The meaning does not come from the page to the reader but rather emerges as the reader interacts with the text (Weaver, 1994: 42). Thus, reading means bringing meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it. Learning to read means learning to bring meaning to a text in order to construct meaning (Weaver, 1994: 42). So, learners are active participants in the reading process and try to make meaning of the world around them and are motivated to adopt a problem-solving approach to understand written language. Reading is considered as a social activity in a meaningful context. Communication of meaning is the purpose of language learning. In this approach, children are introduced to books from a very early age and learn about language while playing and working with actual books rather than basal readers (Flanagan, 1995: 13-16 & Weaver, 1994: 87).

However, reading is a complex process that is not limited to proceeding from part to whole or from whole to part. In addition to this process of reading there are all kinds of transactions taking place, within and among and across levels of language and understanding. The meaning that arises during the reader's transaction with a text may be viewed as:

An ever-fluctuating dance that occurs more or less simultaneously on and across various levels: letters, words, sentences, schemas; writer, text, and reader; text/reader and context; the reader's present with his/her own past; the present reader with other readers, past and present; and so forth. It is all connected in a multidimensional way, a network of meaning. (Weaver, 1994: 44)

The two models, described above, provide frameworks for views on "learning to read". The basic question to pose is "Which of these models might provide the better basis for creating opportunities for learners to become independent readers?" In my view, the aims of the transactional model will enable the child in a more constructive way to develop a lifelong reading enjoyment, because there is less pressure to get the rules of phonics right and the more immediate focus is on meaning. Learning to read through phonics implies, in my view, a forced way of reading associated with a learning environment which is unnatural in the amount of attention it gives to formal accuracy.

In a second language environment it is necessary to create a natural situation for those learners where interaction can take place instead of focusing on learning the rules of decoding skills in order to learn a second language.

This does not mean that code-emphasizing methods are not useful (that is how many people in my environment, including myself, have learned to read and this method is still widely used), but it does not seem likely to help children to improve their reading competence if they do not like reading. It is not only important for them to learn to read, but also to establish a lifelong enjoyment of reading. The approach to reading influences the opportunities for reading that learners might be exposed to in the classroom. It will influence the type of literacy environment which includes, amongst other things, the resources, nature of reading opportunities, assessment, etc. Key within such an environment, are the conditions that will enhance reading development. In the next section the different conditions are examined.

2.1.6 The conditions of a good reading environment

The learning environment in which the learners are situated plays an important role in their learning progress. According to Cambourne (1988) this learning, and in particular, reading environment can be made conducive through eight conditions. These conditions of a good reading environment: immersion, demonstration, engagement, expectations, responsibility, approximation, use and response, are identified by Cambourne as "particular states of being as well as a set of indispensable

circumstances that co-occur and are synergic in the sense that they both affect and are affected by each other” (1995: 184). In my study, particular attention is paid to reading in second language environments and how these reading conditions might influence and enhance reading development.

2.1.6.1 Immersion

One of the critical requirements for life-long learning is immersion, that is, learners ought to be immersed in an environment where they are exposed to literacy in all its aspects. They need to have the “opportunity for”, “availability of” and also “variety of” text forms to engage with (Cambourne, 1988: 33).

Regarding immersion, three interrelated aspects need consideration. The first aspect of immersion is the opportunity the learners have to engage with texts. According to Flanagan (1995: 19-20) learners in a second language environment should be encouraged to read texts and books in the new language from the beginning. When the learner gets the opportunity to read a variety of books in both languages (mother tongue and second language), reading will make sense. The learners need to be immersed in an environment where a variety of texts are available in the different languages (mother tongue, second language and/or third language) in a meaningful context. The context, knowledge of the world and extra-linguistic language information help us to understand language directed to us (Krashen, 1987: 21). The results of a study of learners by Elley (1991: 375-411), shows that the second language and literacy in it are acquired gradually through opportunities to use the language and to engage in literacy events in “meaningful contexts”.

The second aspect of immersion is to know what learners are interested in reading. As Cambourne suggests, it is important to appreciate what young learners are interested in (1988: 33-34) in order to plan and provide the relevant text forms, styles and genres. By implication, it is important that there is availability of appropriate texts which is a third aspect of immersion.

The basic requirements [of learning how to read] are easily stated: on the part of the learner an interest in learning to read...and for the teacher, the ability to find interesting print that the child can make sense of. (Smith, 1985: 147).

The classroom walls should contain as much appealing information as possible to expose the learners to written text, like poems, songs, newspaper articles and also

their individual classroom work. Cambourne’s first condition, “immersion”, is related to Krashen’s view that it is necessary to provide as much comprehensible and interesting input as possible to immerse the learners in the second language. (Krashen, 2002: www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html)

The last aspect of immersion is the familiarity of the text form and the content, which makes the reading predictable. The available text forms should be meaningful in a context which makes sense. The reading “must be made meaningful and useful to children who are struggling to learn” (Cambourne, 1988: 33-34). Texts full of non-sense will de-motivate the pupils, causing unwillingness to read, because the effort to read becomes too high (Smith, 1985: 9). The available reading materials should include a variety of materials in natural language patterns with emphasis on repetitive and predictable patterns (Weaver, 1994: 342).

Immersion can take different forms. It can be either visual or aural (or a mix of both) and it can be teacher-controlled or learner-controlled (Cambourne, 1988: 45).

	Visual	Aural
Teacher-controlled	Choosing basal readers (class readers) that the pupils have to read	Reading stories aloud for the children
Learner-controlled	Reading of self-selected texts	

2.2 Visual and Aural Immersion

Teachers reading to children and providing them with rhythms, cadences and sounds of written language is an example of teacher-controlled aural immersion. Providing the readers with the resources for the learners to immerse themselves both visually as well as aurally through the reading of self-selected texts would be an example of learner-controlled visual and aural immersion (Cambourne, 1988: 46).

2.1.6.2 Demonstration

Together with immersion, another condition, “demonstration”, is emphasised in Cambourne’s theory (1988: 34). This condition means showing the learners what a book is, what print is, how words are used and spelled, and how texts are structured. This whole process is in the hands of the teacher, who serves as a role model.

The real world is filled with demonstrations and if we engage with one of them we internalise some aspect or portion of that particular demonstration. If we

engage with repeated demonstrations of the same action and/or artefact we begin to interpret, organize and reorganize our developing knowledge until we can perform and/or produce that demonstration or a variation of it.

In the classroom, learners should be exposed to a multiplicity of relevant and functional demonstrations, which are continually repeated in a multiplicity of ways using a multiplicity of materials (Cambourne, 1988: 47). The teacher needs to demonstrate language as a whole with its various systems and sub-systems so that the learner will have the data available for working out how all the pieces fit together and interact with each other. The purpose of a continuous repetition of a demonstration is to allow for engagement to occur until the learners have taken sufficient information from the demonstration to make it part of their repertoire of skills and knowledge (Cambourne, 1988: 49).

Unfortunately there is no ideal length for a demonstration. Everything that occurs in a classroom is demonstration. Learners will engage with demonstrations if these happen to be relevant to their particular needs or interests. An example of demonstration is the reading aloud of stories. It has a lot of advantages. Interesting stories will acquaint children with peculiarities and conventions of written language (Smith, 1985: 134). Parents who read for or with their children will demonstrate different types of written and oral discourses containing a certain style and language appropriate to that story (Heath, 1983: 294). The children learn how texts express different views and in that way they develop critical skills and express positive values (The Department of Education, 2001: 46). Teachers can use story-telling activities for several purposes. The learners may be given opportunities to tell their own stories which can be recorded and transcribed for later reading. By doing so, the learners demonstrate to each other different ways of telling stories and they become sensitive to each other's interests (Smith, 1985: 304-305).

2.1.6.3 Engagement

The interrelated conditions, immersion and demonstration need learners' engagement to take place. Without learners' engagement, the demonstrations which are made available by the persons or artefacts surrounding the readers, will wash over and pass the learners by. First of all, learners need to believe that a certain demonstration is do-able. If they do not believe that they are capable of ever mastering whatever is being demonstrated, engagement is unlikely to occur.

Secondly, the learners need to see the “do-able” demonstration as something that will somehow further the purposes of their lives. The context in which they live and move is filled with examples of how acts of talking and communicating do further the purposes of life (Cambourne, 1988: 55-56). Finally the learners will not engage unless the risks associated with engagement are endurable. All engagement involves a risk but if the risks are perceived by the learner to be unendurable or threatening in any way, then engagement will be avoided (Cambourne, 1988: 52). It is the teacher’s task to convince the learners to take the risk and to let them feel at ease. The teacher creates a comfortable, encouraging environment to allow learners to make errors and to learn from their mistakes rather than punishing them.

2.1.6.4 Expectations

The pupils should be able to participate in reading in the classroom without the constant pressure of evaluation and assessment. (Smith, 1985: 128, 131)

Expectations are messages that are communicated to learners in a variety of very subtle ways. They are somehow connected with the confidence that a teacher consistently displays in the learners’ abilities to be ultimately successful in whatever they are trying to master. Displaying confidence in the children and convincing them that reading is a worthwhile activity usually has very positive consequences. Creating expectations focuses on the learners’ abilities to be successful (Cambourne, 1988: 57). Expectations are very closely related to building high self-esteem in learners and developing a loving and trusting relationship with them. Feelings of security and adequacy play an important role in achievement, and in reading development it is no different. A positive view of self can be learned and teachers can help to create a climate in which each learner is respected for his/her uniqueness and where learners are listened to as well as spoken to (Clay, 1972: 11). The learners need to be convinced, in an enthusiastic way, to show positive feelings towards reading. Cambourne (1988: 60) suggests: “get to know your pupils, so that your expectations at the individual level are valid”.

In a second language environment it is important to create a situation that motivates the children. High self-confidence and low anxiety are affective factors that play an important role in the acquisition of a second language (Krashen, 1987: 30-32). Students fail not only because they lack English fluency, but because what is

communicated to learners in interactions with educators is not motivating and contains low expectations (Cummins, 1996: 64-65).

2.1.6.5 Responsibility

Responsibility from the learners' side means that they decide what part of the task is going to be internalised. The learners display a willingness to make decisions about learning independently of the teacher. The learners ought to be immersed in a literacy rich environment and the teacher should show them how to read and how to make choices. At the same time, teachers can make a huge difference when they are encouraging and motivating the children in the classroom and when they respond positively to the children's reading attempts (Weaver, 1994: 86). Initially, teachers can help the learners to select their own reading materials, to get them involved in their own reading development and management of their reading process, and to use it in real life situations as part of lifelong engagement in reading. So, reading is not only encouraged as a learning tool in the classroom, but also to show the learners how reading can be an enjoyable activity.

Responsibility from the teacher's side (or the more able adult or peer) also means he/she supplies demonstrations and provides a climate of positive expectation. The teacher trusts the learners to engage with the demonstrations which are made available (Cambourne, 1988: 61-62). The guidance and the support of learners to develop them as independent readers (lifelong reading and learning) is the goal that teachers should aim for (Weaver, 1994: 59 and Goodman Watson & Burke, 1996: 19). The teacher is therefore not only responsible for helping readers, but also for organizing the instructional environment (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 16). Eventually the teacher may share responsibility for making decisions together with the learners. The teacher, in the process, empowers the learners to take ownership of and responsibility for their own learning (Weaver, 1994: 343).

It can be concluded that reading ought to be an enjoyable social activity and a situation in which mutual and interdependent learning occurs, thus creating what Weaver described as "a shared reading experience" (1994: 87, 94). It is co-operation between learners, learners and teachers or other adults who are given the opportunity to read independently and make their own choices in class.

2.1.6.6 Approximation

Cambourne defines approximation as the space learners receive to make errors and learn through these errors. In order to achieve a level of independent reading, we need to encourage the learners in risk taking in their reading development process. The learners need to try out things. Without making approximations, we encourage restriction to safe behaviour, which might not encourage learners to become independent readers. This may result in learners never exposing themselves to what is new, because the main focus is on getting-it-right-the-first-time. Teachers often believe that an integral part of learning is the rooting out of an error before it becomes too firmly established. Without the opportunity to make errors (or miscues), the whole smooth-running learning cycle is stopped and progress and refinement of the skills become almost impossible (Cambourne, 1988: 66).

Independent readers get more opportunities to read for meaning, because they are considered able to read silently. So, reading silently means that they are not constantly corrected and they are allowed approximations. Often less proficient readers get more isolated skill training, and they have to read aloud and are constantly corrected for making miscues, because the teachers focuses on getting-it-right. This results in a reluctant feeling and eventually the learners become scared to make mistakes while reading (Weaver, 1994: 135). The teacher ought to respond positively to successive approximations, thus encouraging risk taking and hypothesis formation (Weaver, 1994: 343). Allowing approximations can prevent children from creating poor reading habits e.g. reading too slowly, emphasizing reading every word correctly or the fear of making mistakes (Smith, 1985: 34). According to Cambourne the freedom to approximate is an essential ingredient of all successful learning, not only reading (1988: 70).

As a teacher it is important not to put the student on the defensive. This means that the student should not be tested and corrected all the time, because it disrupts the focus on communication in the acquisition process (Krashen, 1987: 73). Kenneth and Yetta Goodman (1986) did a study of reading miscues among speakers of English as second language. They agree that miscuing needs to be valued and understood. The reader can only learn by doing, because reading is not an exact process and always involves miscalculations and approximations (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 17-18).

2.1.6.7 Use

Use or practice, as Cambourne (1988) calls this condition, means that reading competences can only be acquired through the “practice of reading” (Smith, 1985: 7 and Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1996: 15). An essential part of the learning cycle is the opportunity for the learner to play around with or put into effect the hypothesis she/he is currently working on. Role-play (in the classroom) is a way to create an almost real world situation, which coerces the learners into using language. The interactions that take place in such situations create opportunities for learners to receive feedback about the appropriateness of their activities. Teachers need to create settings in which learners experience an urgent need to read, in order to demonstrate why they should become lifelong readers in the real world, not just in a classroom-activity (Cambourne, 1988: 70, 74 & Clay, 1972: 38).

The classroom is the place where most pupils learn how to read and get practice in reading. Often the classroom is associated with learning reading in a forced situation. Sometimes the reading is not successful in such an unnatural situation and consequently teachers are seen as the cause of the failure. It is essential for the teacher to demonstrate reading and give the pupil the space to practice through reading (Smith, 1985: 4-5).

2.1.6.8 Response

Response means feedback and/or evaluation. Providing learners with feedback is important, if it confronts them with their errors in a constructive and empowering way. It is necessary that the teacher reports this feedback to the learner in a positive way, so that it is not seen as punishment. Teachers accept and celebrate learners’ attempts to control reading and writing. If teachers know their learners well enough, they should know whether an attempt at reading is a genuine one, which represents the learner’s state of knowledge and development. Celebration is manifested by enthusiasm by the teacher for the learner’s achievement. In a classroom context, evaluation is a more conscious activity than in much of the real world. The evaluation will give the teacher a view on the learner’s knowledge in a non-threatening way. By keeping a record of the evaluations, feedback and the observations of the learners’ engagement and responsibility in the reading activities, the teacher can follow the learner’s progress.

We can say that the learner and the teacher communicate for the purposes of achieving something and as a by-product of this original purpose there is a response, which supplies the learner with information on what he is trying to master (Cambourne, 1988: 77-79).

In conclusion, I would like to stress that it was necessary to establish the description of the reading models and the features of independent reading prior to giving an account of Cambourne's eight reading conditions. The most effective reading model, and the features of the independent reader helped to identify the aim that needed to be achieved in creating a conducive reading environment.

2.2 In summary

Discussing the theories on language development and learning in a second language environment, I aimed to put reading in a broader context of literacy. I consider reading as a dynamic meaning making process taking place in a natural context in which there is an interaction between learner and the text. This definition puts focuses on the learner. So, if we want to follow learners' progress on reading in the classroom, we need to focus on the characteristics of an "independent" reader to assist "less proficient" readers. The learner-centred approach applied in the classroom is further clarified in the reading models.

In my classroom research I focus mainly on two reading conditions "immersion" and "engagement", as described in Cambourne's theory. It is difficult to separate any of the reading conditions, but I isolate the two and acknowledge that because they are intertwined with the other conditions and thereby influence each other.

Before we move on to the research design, I would like to clarify the importance of my study within the existing reading research generally, but also in a South African context.

2.3 Related Research

Most reading research related to mine has been conducted in the USA. Within this American context little attention has been paid to reading in a multilingual classroom.

One study which does focus on it is Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson (2000). They noticed the low expectations teachers had towards second language learners. In their research the authors challenge the assumption that learners, especially in second language environments, should conquer decoding skills before they are able to talk about meaning. Their aim was to investigate first grade bilingual learners' thoughts on literature and their ability to discuss it. They planned literature discussions once or twice a week with the first grade bilingual learners, but no specifications were given on the period of time they spent with them.

Their findings showed that learners are able to engage in meaningful talk about literature discussing social, cultural and political issues which they connected to their own lives. The social interaction between the learners seemed to benefit them as they learned from each other. In conclusion the researchers stated that the bilingual learners, no matter what their linguistic background, seemed to have the potential to discuss literature. In order to give learners the chance to voice their opinion, the teacher needed to create a non-threatening environment and offer appropriate challenges to the learners.

Other researchers, such as Brown (2000), examined the reading process. Brown's research indicates that learning to read is a developmental process during which students make changes over time. She stresses the importance of independent reading that can be achieved through Vygotsky's idea about enabling learners to reach their full potential by using the construct of the zone of proximal development. Brown's aim was to find concrete ways for teachers to use appropriate texts for beginning readers. She asked whether beginning readers need predictable or decodable text. She studied two first grade teachers in a USA school in a metropolitan area. The learners came from middle and working class families with different ethnic backgrounds.

The research was done within the paradigm of action research. The teachers of two grade one classes, who were observed in Brown's research, developed a comprehensive literacy program. They made time to read aloud, a wide variety of text and genres were available, and the learners were taught comprehension strategies. Workshops were organised to encourage learners to read independently and to construct meaning.

Brown's findings are presented in three case studies of learners to show their stage of reading development: learning about the print, breaking the code and going

for fluency. In conclusion, it was stated that primary classes might benefit from having all kinds of books available to support all the learners in the different stages of reading development.

The aim to read independently is also stated in Menon & Mirabito's research as their focus of research (1999). They discuss how they organised learners' reading time and what action they took. Their focus was on a grade four and a grade six class. The aim of their research, which lasted a few weeks (no specifications), was to hook the learners on books. They made learners aware of reading as enjoyment and sharing that joy with others. They gave the learners what they called "HOB time" (hook on books) and used charts with opinions on the books the learners read to share with each other.

The main finding of Menon & Mirabito's reading research showed the social aspect of reading. It seemed that the learners needed support of a knowledgeable other to reach their full potential, as Vygotsky suggests.

According to Baumann, Hooten & White (1999) it is important that reading strategies are taught in a meaningful context. The aim of their work was to integrate comprehension strategy instruction into literature reading and response activities with fifth graders. At the same time they were aiming to find out if reading comprehension development is a result of reading strategies and the learners' attitude toward reading and literature.

Five hundred and fourteen fifth graders from lower middle class in a US community were taught various reading strategies. Books were used as the medium for teaching comprehension strategies. They found that the learners learned the reading strategies that were taught in those meaningful contexts and that they could also apply them into other contexts. At the same time learners reported that they valued reading more and also reported that they read more because of their appreciation of literature.

Pretorius' research (2002) focuses on a South African context. She investigates learners in higher grades, as it seemed that they are assumed to be able to read fluently, but in reality they still struggle (Pretorius, 2002: 99). She summarizes this concern as follows "skill in reading becomes more demanding as students move up the education ladder, while the gap between skilled and unskilled readers widens." (Pretorius, 2002: 91)

Pretorius aimed to find an answer for three questions: “What are the reading levels of South African students?”, “How does reading relate to academic performance?” and “What is the state of reading research in South African?”

In order to answer the first question Pretorius refers back to reading research that has been done in South African, including her own (previous) research. She says that previous research shows that the focus of reading is too much on decoding skills and not on comprehension. Hence the learners’ poor reading levels, especially in higher grades and even at university. This, she suggests, causes a poor ability to learn.

Pretorius’ second question regarding academic performance was investigated through testing primary school learners in 1998. Later on she conducted similar reading tests with first year psychology students at Unisa. According to her results there seemed to be a strong relationship between reading ability and academic performance. Students who scored poorly on reading performed poorly academically.

In order to answer her third research question, Pretorius made a study of the existing journals on literacy, applied language studies and others in which reading research might appear. It seems that little research has been done specifically on reading in a South African context.

Most of the studies that took place in the USA seemed to be aware of Vygotsky’s social theory of learning, which is very relevant in explaining language development. Unfortunately, most of the American studies focus on lower grades (foundation phase). In these early grades, learners are taught to read and therefore they are assumed to be able to read independently in the intermediate phase. So, it is assumed that there is little need for research on learning to read in higher grades.

My study focuses on grade six learners since some of them still struggle with reading, although they are assumed to have reached a level of independent reading and thus be able to read for comprehension. I emphasise the need to immerse learners in a book-rich environment and engage them in meaningful reading activities in order to stimulate reading development.

As mentioned previously, most studies did not investigate reading in a second language environment. Not even Cambourne (1988) dealt with learning to read in multilingual environments. Therefore, my research, which takes place in a multilingual South African context, aims to contribute towards filling that gap as it places emphasis on reading in a second language environment. At the same time I

consider reading and learning to read as a continuous process relevant for all ages in all grades.

With my study I aim to contribute to research on reading and hopefully stimulate other researchers to focus on reading development in a South African context because reading is an important aspect of life. I do not consider reading as just a skill we learn in the foundation phase, but as Pretorius (2002) does I emphasize the importance of reading as a life skill, because it has an influence on later learning performances. As Pretorius argues,

Reading not only improves reading skill, it also promotes language development, and has been found to be a powerful means for improving proficiency in an additional language. (Pretorius, 2002: 98)

I would also like to stress that I do not seek to make any theoretical generalisation through the results of my research, as the period of my intervention, though intensive, was rather short. My research follows a qualitative paradigm and stresses the concerns and the possible solutions through enhancement of the existing classroom conditions.

I argue that my research is relevant and important as little qualitative in-depth research has been done on reading development in higher grades in a multilingual South African context. Such research is necessary and relevant in order to plan appropriate intervention to help learners through their education to develop their reading skills (making meaning) in their mother tongue and additional languages continuously.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of my research is to seek some ways of enhancing reading conditions in a multilingual grade six class, and as such my research design needed to capture information about the learners' language backgrounds, attitudes and reading habits. It also needed to facilitate the establishment and monitoring of enhanced reading conditions such as immersion and engagement. Methods of data analysis had to be chosen which assessed the outcome of the intervention by reflecting the differences in learners' reading between the initial phase and the final phase. In this chapter I explain my choice of methodology, and I discuss the different data collection and data analysis methods I used. I also comment on my position as researcher in this study.

3.1 Chosen methodological approach

The methodological approach that was chosen was qualitative. In what follows I account for my choice of this approach.

My study is located within a qualitative paradigm. Such research is more diverse than quantitative research because the structure of the design and data is not fully organized in advance, but develops as the research proceeds. Qualitative research uses multiple strategies and methods to make the results more reliable and trustworthy (Punch, 1998: 148). Silverman explains that qualitative research is used to understand the participants' categories and to see how these are used in concrete activities. Qualitative research varies, but always assumes that systematic inquiry must occur in a natural setting rather than an artificially constrained situation (Silverman, 1993: 10 and 23 & Anderson, 1994: 102). The same idea is found in Punch's work, where he states that qualitative research is done in situations that are reflective of the everyday life of individuals or groups. He also states that qualitative research is conducted through an intense contact with a "field" or life situation (Punch, 1998: 149).

Qualitative research is therefore undertaken by researchers who prefer naturally occurring data and field research which involves observing and analysing real-life situations, actions and activities as they occur (Silverman, 1993: 23-24). The researcher values the views, perspectives, opinions, prejudices and beliefs of participants in the research as a means to understand the participants' world

(Delamont, 1992: 7-8 and Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 381). The qualitative researcher is interested in how people interact, how their attitudes are translated into actions.

The reason why a qualitative paradigm was chosen lies in the nature of my research interest, with its focus on the research question of how to enhance the conditions of reading in a multilingual grade six. The emphasis of this study is on the quality of relationships, activities, situations and materials. This kind of research thus requires a holistic approach, which means that relevant aspects of a phenomenon need to be described as comprehensively as possible (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 380).

An important feature of collecting qualitative data and doing the initial analyses is “induction”. Induction refers to the position of theory in the research. The researcher begins to collect data and follows this with an initial period in which she/he seeks theoretical propositions that match and help elucidate the data (Anderson, 1994: 108-109). Inductive qualitative research is sensitive to unexpected events. Thus it has to take cognisance of the risk that too much early reliance on theory or prior research may adversely influence understandings and interpretations of data in an inductive research project (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 111-113).

In my case, I had been immersed in literacy theories before starting the fieldwork. During my initial period of observations, I identified some problems regarding reading, which I thought would be interesting to research. Thereafter, I found myself going from classroom to theory and back. For example, I had to go back to the theory after my findings showed that reading is a social activity. I decided that Vygotsky’s theory would support my findings in an appropriate way. The dialogue between theory and fieldwork was a constant refinement of my understanding of the phenomenon I was researching.

3.2 Site and Sample

My research was conducted in a school in the District Six area of Cape Town. The school itself has an interesting history⁷. Originally, dating back to 1913, it was an English-medium school for white children and in 1937 it was designated for coloured learners. Until 1956, the medium of instruction was English. However, in the same year an Afrikaans-medium stream was introduced in compliance with a new government policy directive regarding mother-tongue education.

⁷ The information was gathered through informal conversation with the headmaster and the grade five and six teachers, and from information available at the District Six museum.

Mass removals from the area caused a drop in numbers, because the school had drawn most of its learners from the District Six area. In the 1980s it attracted mainly children from English or Afrikaans-speaking homes, and both Muslim and Christian learners. The English-medium classes from all grades were always larger than their Afrikaans-medium counterparts. Since the late 1990's, there has been a steady decline in the number of children from the immediate neighbourhood attending the school (only about 60%). The school began to bus learners from Langa or Khayelitsha, which is between 25 and 30 kilometres away from the school. Hence, the changes in the language profile of learners, because in addition to Afrikaans or English speaking learners, there are now learners from Xhosa-speaking homes in these two areas.

There is no longer a choice of medium of instruction. All classes are now in English. Many learners are learning through a language that is not their first language. When the school started to attract Xhosa-speaking pupils, none of the teachers could speak the language. However, in 2002 a Xhosa teacher was employed. This means that learners may receive assistance in translations, but with only one teacher to support Xhosa-speaking learners and their teacher, it is questionable how effective the system is.

My sample was purposively and not random selected, because the teacher of one grade six class showed an interest in the research and was willing to participate. Data were collected from one of two grade six classes in this school. The sample itself consisted of 18 boys and 24 girls who attended school regularly.

3.3 Methods of Data collection

Initial phase	-Reading Survey1
	-Cloze procedure test
	-Observations (classroom, teacher and pupils)
	-Interview with the teacher
Main Research Period: A. Intervention B. Final Phase	-Creating reading conditions
	-Introduction of reading strategies
	-Observation
	-Reading Survey2
	-Cloze procedure test
	-Interviews with children

Table 3.1: Data collection methods used in the research

Table 3.1 gives an outline of the data-collection methods that I used during my research.

3.3.1 *The initial phase*

The forms of data collection in the initial phase are further explained below.

3.3.1.1 Reading Survey

The initial phase of my study began with a self-report reading survey which I designed. It was a group-administered instrument of the kind used as a source of information in research and evaluation studies and in planning programmes in education (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996 and Fink, 1995: 2). The Reading Survey (see appendix 1), which was used in the initial phase, solicited information from the children about their attitudes towards reading, their interests and their reading habits in the educational setting and at home. The survey had a total of 34 questions, which were divided into four parts; general, school, home and favourite books. It contained 32% open-ended questions, 32% multiple-choice questions and 36% yes/no questions.

In the Reading Survey, 59% of the items asked learners about their reading habits at home and at school. Questions covered: the language(s) in which they read; the language(s) in which they preferred to read; where they read; how many books they had read; how much time they spent on reading in that particular year; what reading activities they did in the classroom.

Twenty six percent of the items questioned the learners about their interests, e.g. what kind of books they read; what genre of books they preferred; what their favourite story was. Fifteen percent of the questions asked about their attitudes towards reading, e.g. do they like reading; do they enjoy it when the teacher reads stories; do they like reading aloud; do they like reading silently. These questions were designed to elicit information about the reading interests, habits and preferences of learners and the information gained from the survey was used to plan the intervention.

I made it very clear that the learners' responses to the survey items would not be graded. I told them that the results of the survey would provide information that I could use to make reading more interesting for them, and that the information would be helpful only if they provided their most honest responses.

3.3.1.2 Cloze procedure test

I made use of a cloze-procedure test (see appendix 2) to gain some understanding about the learners' reading level. In "Cloze procedure and the teaching of reading" by Rye (1982), this form of testing is not seen as a process of requiring readers to fill gaps in sentences, but is described as:

The use of a piece of writing in which certain words have been deleted and the pupil has to make maximum possible use of context clues available in predicting the missing words...The use of the surrounding context to help the reader guess the missing word is essential to the concept of Cloze Procedure as a meaningful way of helping reading in the classroom (Rye, 1982: 1).

An advantage of this type of exercise is that it can be used to identify what text is suitable for which learner. The teacher is then able to determine whether a book will provide enough challenge for a certain learner to stretch the learner's skills to the limits. According to Rye (1982) such exercises can be used as a readability measure in the classroom as it reflects a person's understanding of a text. The test supplied a context in which the learners had to discover meaning in order to fill in the gaps. While other kinds of tests will only focus on a limited range of abilities, cloze procedure testing involves the learner in several activities related to reading. It requires that learners recognise words, use semantic, syntactic and stylistic information in order to predict the deleted word, draw meaning from outside the context of the immediate sentence, skim (look at what has been read) and scan to look for information to predict. While it has many advantages, this kind of exercise has the limitation that it can only attempt to measure how a particular person does at a particular time and place under particular conditions. It has to be acknowledged that some pupils are better at doing tests than others, and that the performance of the same person on the same test done at different times may vary dramatically (Rye, 1982: 30-31).

The test that I developed was contextualised in that I chose a passage from a book which was already available and had been used in the classroom, and adapted it accordingly. I presumed that the grade six pupils had read the text before. The section used in the test contained a large portion of familiar language and relevant content. Rye (1982: 41) suggests choosing a passage of at least 270 words and maximum 520 words. In such a passage it is advisable to have a deletion rate between

one in 5 and one in 10 deleted words. I decided to select a passage with 330 words, with a deletion rate of one in nine words deleted, so in total 36 words were deleted.

3.3.1.3 Interview with the teacher

Anderson (1994: 115) defines interview as a “conversation with another person, a verbal questionnaire, or a life story”. This general definition implies the variety of techniques one could use in conducting an interview with another person(s). During the initial stage, I interviewed the grade six teacher, focusing on the reading conditions in the classroom.

I used a structured schedule (see appendix 3), which I had prepared prior to the actual interview. The questions asked about the availability and genres of text in the classroom, the time the learners spent on reading, and when and where they read (according to the teacher). These questions were followed by questions about the teacher’s encouragement and assessment of the learners’ reading process. At the end of the interview we talked about specific reading activities and the attitude of some learners.

The interview took place in the grade six classroom during interval. The teacher gave me consent to use a tape recorder. Finding a quiet spot in the school building was challenging. The best place for the interview was the classroom, although we could hear the playground noise in the background. The classroom door was locked, because learners had the tendency of running into the classrooms during interval. Unfortunately our time was very limited (45 minutes), but I succeeded in asking all the prepared questions.

3.3.1.4 Observations and field notes

Through the reading survey and the cloze procedure test, it would be difficult to determine whether or not students actually feel, believe, or do the things they report. According to Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni (1996) only careful observation can verify the information through surveys and tests. Subsequent to the reading survey and the test, a period of two weeks was spent in observing the teacher and the pupils, in order to obtain a more complete idea of the reading conditions, teaching practices and reading habits in the grade six classroom prior to developing the intervention. As a participant-observer I needed to discover the meaning and the

coherence of certain events as an insider. At the same time I was still the outsider observing specific events in the environment.

The method of observing led to another method that I used during the initial stage and the intervention: taking field notes. Detailed notes were taken in the classroom to help me to record information while I was observing the teacher and the students (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 397). I followed the process as Anderson described it (1994: 131): I observed the entire event at the moment, the “stream of behaviour” and I recorded my observations as clearly as possible in a field notebook. This was important, because the taking of field notes helped to sharpen the quality of the observations. I did not always have the chance to write things down immediately, but I tried to jot them down as soon as possible, when I was in the taxi on my way home. However, I realise I might have lost some important information about certain events because of this lack of immediacy in recording my observations.

3.3.2 *The Main Research Period*

The components which comprised the intervention were: providing a variety of texts, developing activities based on reading skills (prediction and sequencing) in order to enhance reading engagement, and observing learners during those activities, and seeing if they changed their reading habits by comparing the results of the survey and text done with those done in the initial phase. I also interviewed seven learners at the end of the main research period.

3.3.2.1 Part A: In preparation of the intervention

The information that I obtained through the data in the initial stage was used to plan my intervention. Firstly I made a selection of 172 books (see appendix 4) from the “Rare books and Special Collections” at the University of Cape Town (UCT) using the results that came out of the first reading survey. I looked for a wide variety of material, e.g. poetry, history, short stories, comic books according to the learners’ interests. At the same time I chose books in the three different languages spoken in the classroom (English, Afrikaans and Xhosa).

In order to cater for what Cambourne (1988) calls “immersion”, I left the books in the classroom for two weeks. Learners had free access to the books during the school day.

The second component of the intervention comprised two activities, prediction and sequencing, that would encourage learners to use various reading strategies. It would enable the learners to develop their meaning making skills through prediction and sequencing activities. These activities included writing a newspaper article with a given title and sequencing jumbled paragraphs of a story.

The first activity, prediction is defined by Flanagan (1985) as breaking a story into suitable segments and giving or reading them out one at a time. The learners then work out or predict what they think is going to happen next. If they are working in groups, with members of a group must ensure that they give evidence for each prediction, and then the predictions are measured against what actually happens in the story. In my activity I gave learners the title of a newspaper article and they had to predict what happened according to the title.

The second activity, sequencing, entails giving a passage that has been cut into pieces to the learners for them to assemble into a meaningful order. This deliberate fragmentation encourages the learners to look more deeply at the detail or style of prose. Whether the learners get-it-right in the end is not as important as the process of constructing meaning, the act of becoming involved with the text (Flanagan, 1985).

At the time of these activities, the teacher was not in the classroom. I was considered to be the teacher for that time, and she did not want to interfere.

The third component of this period are the observations done during this first part of the main research period. These were a necessary addition to the written data that I gathered during the above-mentioned activities. During the observations, field notes were taken not only to collect information on the activities the learners were doing, but also to record learners' attitudes towards reading, their reading habits, the time spent on reading and their choice of reading.

This observation period lasted two weeks and mainly the learners were observed, because they were the focus of my study.

I was not always able to make detailed notes, because at this point in time, I became more a participator or even teacher than a researcher, because I helped learners with the activities. I tried to recall the events and made extensive notes about the conversations afterwards during interval or after school.

3.3.2.2 Part B: The final phase

In the final phase, a second reading survey and the cloze procedure test from the initial phase were given to the learners. This phase was completed with interviews of seven learners.

The first component of the final phase was Reading Survey 2 (see appendix 5) contained 32 questions, focusing on the same items as Reading Survey 1. Its prime purpose was to assess whether there was a change in attitude, reading habits, and interests. Twenty eight percent of the items evaluated the activities introduced to them during the intervention. 37% of the items asked about reading interests, 22% about their reading habits and 13% about their attitude towards reading. In contrast to the first questionnaire, there were 41% yes/no questions in reading survey 2; 28 % of the items were multiple-choice questions, and 31% were open-ended.

As second component, the learners were given the same cloze procedure test (see appendix 2) to post-test the children, in order to see if there was any difference after the actual intervention.

The third component of this phase had the purpose of acquiring more information on striking differences between the two surveys and the observations regarding their reading attitudes, habits and interests; focusing on the two reading surveys, I selected seven learners to interview. They were selected according to the responses found in Reading Survey 1 and 2. These learners had given inconsistent responses or they gave unclear comments in the open-ended questions of the reading surveys.

The interview followed a semi-structured schedule (appendix 6), which enabled me to probe after brief responses. During the interview some learners needed encouragement and support. Children who were shy or who replied on short, quick answers were encouraged to elaborate upon their responses through non-threatening phrases like “tell me more about that”, “what else can you tell me” and “why do you think that?”. Probing of brief responses from children is often necessary in order to reveal important and relevant information (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996: 528-529).

3.4 Triangulation

Triangulation is a process of comparing data gathered through different methods of data collection. It is used to increase the possibility of obtaining a more

consistent and valid assessment that contains sufficient information (Smith, 1998: 123). In my study, I used different methods e.g. observations, reading surveys, interviews and field notes to collect data. The sum of all those tools helps to validate the research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 400), although I acknowledge that my sample is too small to make any generalisations. The method of triangulation was rather used to combine and check all the information obtained through the reading surveys, tests, interviews, observations and field notes. Checking data obtained by the variety of methods used in my research is a way of contributing to trustworthiness and verification of the results (Ely, Anzul, Friedman & Garner, 1991: 96-97).

3.5 Summary of the research process

The school-based research consisted of two main periods: the initial phase and the main research period. The initial phase data, which consisted of a reading survey, a cloze procedure test, observations and an interview, was used as a baseline for work in the main period of the research. Obtaining the baseline data enabled me to plan an appropriate intervention based on the needs, interests and current reading conditions and practices in the multilingual grade six class.

The main research period was divided in two phases: the intervention and the final phase. The intervention phase was planned making use of the results of the initial phase. This phase involved creating better reading conditions, introducing new reading material, other reading strategies, and observations. During this phase I observed and wrote comprehensive field notes.

The final phase used the same cloze-procedure test as in the initial phase, a second reading survey, and interviews with seven pupils. The data thus obtained were analysed in order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. More detail regarding the three phases is given in the rest of this chapter.

3.6 Data Analysis Process

3.6.1 Analysis process of Cloze Procedure tests

The results of the pre-test and the post-test were analysed according to Rye's view on interpreting cloze procedure results (Rye, 1982: 22-24). The results of the test were categorised into three levels, the frustrational, the institutional and the independent. Learners whose results fall within the "frustrational level" are those for whom the chosen paragraph was far too difficult, even if a teacher is available to help

with the reading. Those learners score approximately 40% (14.4/36) or less on the cloze procedure test. The second category, the “instructional level” includes those who scored between 40% and 60%. At this level, the results indicate that the passage is still too difficult to be understood sufficiently. However, with the assistance and encouragement of an adult the learner could read it. Learners who score 60% (21.6/36) or more are placed in the third category “independent level”. These learners are able to read the passage with a high degree of understanding without any help from a teacher.

3.6.2 *Analysing Interviews, observations, field notes and reading surveys*

Before they were analysed, the interviews were transcribed and the observations and field notes, which recorded the events as well as my own interpretations of them, were typed. These typed records were read several times before I coded it. The colour coding identified all mentions of the factors I had been alerted to through my reading as probably significant. In addition, I coded one factor (the social aspect of reading) which my observation had led me to believe was very important, although I had not read anything about it. I then search for theory for which would account for this factor and found Vygotsky.

The data acquired through the reading surveys used in the initial phase and the final phase was analysed to show the relative frequencies of the answers.

All the data gathered through these different methods was analysed in depth in order to show attitudes (teachers and learners); reading practices (time, place, type) and reading preferences. I analysed the data from the initial phase first, extracting from it the information I needed (about learners’ reading preferences habits and attitudes) in order to plan the intervention.

After the fieldwork was completed I noted changes between the data of the initial phase and final phase. Information acquired through the interviews and the reading surveys was compared with what was observed and jotted down in the field notes. The categories identified through the coding was put in different themes and categories.

3.6.3 Discourse Analysis

[This term refers to] linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse...it refers to attempts to study the organisation of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language use in social contexts and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers (Slembrouck, 2003, <http://bank.rug.ac.be/da/da.htm#ap>).

In this study the term discourse analysis refers to analysing written language, because the data that are used for this analysis emanates from the writing activities organised during the intervention (prediction and sequencing). As a framework for my analysis I relied on Fairclough (1989, 1992), and Cook (1989).

Fairclough drew a three-layered model as in Figure 3.1, including the text, interaction and social context as the three elements of discourse. The centre of the model displays language text, which can be spoken, written or signed. The second layer discourse practice surrounds language text. It involves text production and text interpretation. The broadest layer socio-cultural practice refers to wider social and political relationships (1989: 25). Between the different layers of the model, Fairclough states that there are three stages: the description of text, interpretation of the relationships, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context (Fairclough, 1989: 109).

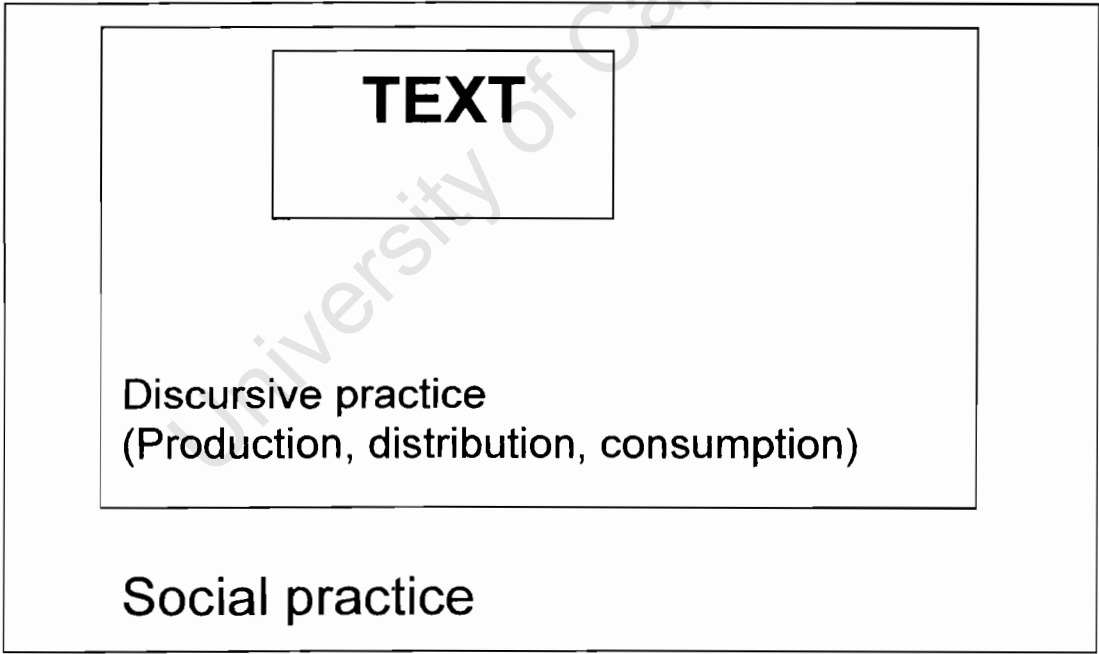


Figure 3.1: Three layered model of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992: 73)

To analyse the data I focused on text analysis, which is only one part of discourse analysis. In this regard, I looked at the context outside the text to follow how the learners used information to make meaning.

Within a text, links between sentences (repetition of words, or use of related words), which are formal connections between sentences, are referred to as cohesion. Fairclough (1989: 176) distinguishes two ways of analysing cohesion: the analysis of cohesive functional relations and the analysis of explicit cohesive markers on the surface of the text. I discuss only four types of cohesive markers which Halliday (1985: 288-289) in Fairclough (1989: 176) identified: reference, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Reference or “referring expressions” as Cook (1989: 16) describes them, refer back or forward to a certain part in the text (personal pronouns, demonstratives and the definite article). Ellipsis leaves out information that can be traced in another part of the text or it is replaced with a substitute word to make that cohesive link between different parts of the text. Conjunction refers to cohesion with conjunctive words and expressions such as “since”, “if”, “and”, “therefore”, “in addition”, “in other words” (Fairclough, 1989: 176-177 & Cook, 1989: 14-21). Finally, “lexical cohesion” creates cohesion through the repetition of words, the linking of words and expressions in synonymy or hyponymy and words that belong to the same semantic domain co-occur.

The way these cohesive markers are described makes it seem as if they are objective elements in a text, whereas they are dynamic. Different people, in this instance the learners, interpret the texts in different ways to make meaning. My interpretation of those cohesive markers might be different than how the learners interpreted the texts.

3.7 The researcher

Data were collected through intensive contact and participant-observation in the classroom. Through such means, the researcher develops a deeper understanding of the site by adopting a functional role and becoming a participant (Saville-Troike, 1989: 108-109).

The idea of observing and participating started in response to the positivistic tradition, which highlighted the distance between the researcher and the object. In this tradition, the observer tried to avoid any kind of interaction or participation with his objects. This tradition held that facts exist and can be collected without

interference of the observer. The result is supposed to be as authentic and close to the objective reality as possible.

The term participant-observation originates from anthropology. The armchair anthropologists in the late 1800s had written about cultures they had never visited. Malinowski (1922) was the first anthropologist to conduct fieldwork, called participant-observation, because he was in the field with the people he studied, participating in their lives.

In postmodernism the role of the researcher is re-conceptualised. Qualitative observation as a method used within the tradition of phenomenology and sees human beings as active co-creators of their daily lives. This view contrasts with the positivistic approach and emphasises the active participation of the researcher. The participant observer is expected by the group to share, ask questions and take notes, because this is consistent with the role as an observer (Taft, 1982). The research is organised in close cooperation with the field and the subjects observed.

According to Anderson (1994, 131) we can differentiate several varieties of participant observation. Figure 3.2 outlines types of participant-observation: passive observation, moderate participation (balance between participation and observation) and active participant observation. Teacher researchers are participants in the classroom, and thus considered to be total participant-observers.

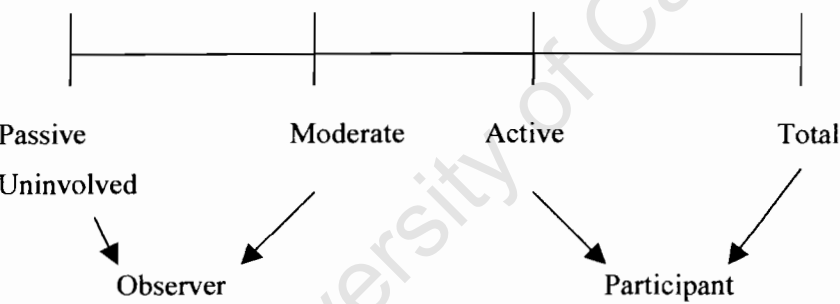


Figure 3.2 Types of Participant-observation (Saville-Troike: 1989)

The method of participant observing requires recognition of cultural relativism, knowledge about possible cultural differences, sensitivity and objectivity in perceiving others. Saville-Troike (1989) states that the researcher should contribute to the welfare of the host group in a way they recognise and desire. So, the

researcher should not be taking data without returning something of immediate usefulness to the community.

Successful fieldwork for a participant-observation approach means a high level of linguistic and cultural competence, especially if the research takes place in a limited time frame. The key to successful observation and interference is freeing oneself from one's own cultural filter (Saville-Troike, 1989: 119-123).

I did not consider myself as an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer standing outside and above the research as researcher did in a positivistic tradition. I would rather consider myself as a participating observing researcher taking my own influence and knowledge into consideration during my study. I consider this research as a two way process between researcher and the researched in which we learn together "in the creation of knowledge" as Punch (1998: 146) states it.

Therefore, I acknowledge my subjectivity as a researcher, being aware of my feelings and attitudes involved in the fieldwork. I brought my own biases, assumptions, patterns of thinking, and knowledge gained from experience and reading into the research.

I also came across other people's perspectives and opinions, which were opposed to my own ideas. Hence, it was important to keep in mind that teachers and learners did not have to accept me or co-operate with me. As Hitchcock & Hughes (1989: 64) phrased it, "discretion, sensitivity and common sense are priority here". The grade six teacher or other staff members would tell me certain "insider information" and try to get my opinion or advice. I had enough information to understand the situation, but at the same time I was not fully involved in it. As Hitchcock & Hughes (1989: 64-65) advise future researchers in their work, I had to find a diplomatic way to handle these occurrences.

The circumstances surrounding my research placed me in the position of both "insider" and "outsider". I chose this dual position, because it both as advantages and disadvantages. When acting as a complete insider, teachers would accept me as one of them, but there were also disadvantages. The researcher as insider might lose the overview of the situation and get lost in details and highly salient data may be overlooked, because it is so familiar. As an outsider I thought it was likely that I would be able to obtain representative data from the learners and the teacher. I needed to be aware that this might have affected the behaviour of the people being

studied, but this aspect is taken into consideration when analysing the data (Taft, 1982: 61).

The idea was to position myself as participant-observer and researcher and I was introduced as such to learners and teachers. However, many students did not fully understand the purposes of my being in their classroom, if I was not a teacher. They called me “Miss”, because I spent most of the time with the grade six teacher or with other staff members, consequently they perceived me as one of the teachers. Of course there is an age gap between the children and me, which resulted in them rather perceiving me as a teacher than as a student. The relationship between the students and me was unequal, similar to the relationship that the learners have with their teacher. The fact that they identified me as a teacher might have had an influence on the results of my data collection, although I never experienced that the learners felt uncomfortable or limited in my presence.

My own subjectivity could block my view of what is significant in the data, or prevent me from moving from descriptive to theoretical levels of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 95).

Much of this research is dependent on my observations, which could have made it difficult to check the validity of my conclusions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 393-394). Fortunately, I triangulated my data collection strategies, thus minimising exclusive subjective views.

3.8 Ethics and Confidentiality

To some extent research intrudes into people’s lives, especially with qualitative research, because it often deals with the most sensitive, intimate and innermost matters in people’s lives, and ethical issues inevitably accompany the collection of such information (Punch, 1998: 281).

The Department of Education of the Western Cape received an outline of my study. They returned a form in which they gave me permission to conduct my research. At the same time, the principal gave me written permission to conduct research in his school.

I promised the learners and the teachers to keep the research information confidential and anonymous. Nobody apart from myself would have access to the tapes containing the interviews, and the transcriptions and other material will not be shown to anyone.

The participants in my research were, prior to my research, clearly informed about the content and the goals of my research. The learners' parents were not directly informed about my presence in their children's classroom. I considered the principal's consent enough to conduct the research, because there was no risk involved in this study. The participants, who are the learners of the grade six class, had the chance to ask me whatever questions they wished about my background and my research intentions. The learners cooperated on a voluntary basis. I never forced them to complete any survey or test and I never forced them to participate in the activities that I organized. Although their teacher encouraged them to take part, most of them participated out of curiosity or interest.

3.9 Limitations of the study

3.9.1 The language

At the beginning of my research, there was a limitation in communication, because initially I had a problem understanding the different languages used in the class. The learners and even the teacher used distinct and different pronunciations and code-switched very easily (English mixed with Afrikaans and Xhosa). I do not speak Afrikaans or Xhosa and English is not my mother tongue, nor was English the mother tongue of most learners in the grade six class. As researcher I acknowledged these possible communication obstacles which could have influenced some of my observations, but my own language background helped me. My mother tongue is Dutch and thus similar to Afrikaans. Therefore, I had little difficulty understanding the latter and after a short period I was used to the different pronunciations. Prior to my research I had taken a Xhosa intensive course at UCT which helped me to understand basic conversations in that language. My background, and my general interest in languages helped me to adapt very quickly.

3.9.2 Time

The period in which books were made available was very limited, only two weeks. The short period of the intervention was caused by constraints beyond my control as the Department of Education prohibits research in the schools during the fourth term of the school year. The fact that the learners read more than normal during that period might be due to the excitement and the novelty of having books in the classroom, an aspect which I fully acknowledge.

3.9.3 *Size of the sample*

The study was very limited in size, because I did my research in only one class since I preferred to conduct an in-depth qualitative study. However, that means that the data can only be generalized within a group, within a context, because the sample size is too small to make external generalisability possible (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 145).

3.9.4 *Gaps in the research*

In this section I would like to address the shortcomings in the process of the data gathering. Initially I planned more interviews with the teacher in the intervention and final phase. During my main research period, the teacher was mostly out of the classroom and left me alone with the learners, because she was organising after-school activities and during intervals she would be in meetings with other staff members. After this intervention period I would have liked to follow up the situation in the classroom by interviewing the grade six teacher again, but she was not available due to illness.

The research done in the initial phase was comprehensive and the time spent to observe the learners and teacher was enough, but my time was rather limited to complete the intervention and the final phase. I would have liked to organise more activities during the intervention period based on reading strategies other than prediction and sequencing. Unfortunately, the Department of Education does not allow researchers in the classroom during the fourth term of the school year. Therefore, my intervention could only be two weeks, the last two weeks of the third term.

4. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of my research was to examine how the reading conditions in a multilingual grade six class could be enhanced by focusing on immersion and engagement, as conceived by Cambourne (see Chapter 2 Literature review). As the initial phase and to ascertain the current conditions in the classroom, I gathered information that enabled me to plan an appropriate intervention (see Chapter 3 Research design). The first section in this chapter describes the results of the initial phase including the profile of the classroom, the learners and the teaching conditions.

The second and third sections describe the results of the main research period, which include data collected during the intervention and the final phase through a reading survey, cloze procedure test, observations activities and interviews.

4.1 Initial phase results

4.1.1 Classroom layout

The classroom profile was based on observations and field notes recorded during the familiarising phase which lasted from February till May 2002 and the initial phase from 13th August until 6th September 2002. The classroom is big and has five windows. The paint on the walls and ceiling was peeling. Colourful curtains, tablecloths, posters and a table full of plants were signs that the teacher tried to make the classroom a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment.

The wall to the left of the entrance door was filled by a big blackboard, which was partly used for classroom administration (e.g. names of learners who did not hand in their homework or their portfolios, teachers who borrowed a book). Another part of the blackboard was covered with exercises. The rest of the blackboard wall contained learners' work about "a balanced diet for human beings", which had been done that year. Above the board, in the middle of the wall, hung a broken clock. Under the blackboard a light blue built-in-cupboard, which was not locked held the learners' portfolios and year's work.

As illustrated on the floor plan drawing below (figure 4.1), a big carpet lay on the floor in front of the teacher's desk, which stood at the back of the classroom. Recent work, which still needed correction, was piled up on the teacher's desk. In front of the teacher's desk there was a small bench, used by the teacher to sit on while reading stories. The carpet and the teacher's desk divided the classroom in two sides. Because of the seating arrangement, most of the forty-two learners had to look at the

blackboard sideways. It would seem that learners with the same language background preferred to sit together when they were given group work that is, Afrikaans and English learners would work together respectively and Xhosa learners would sit in their own groups. During the period of my observations, the learners' seating arrangement would change regularly.

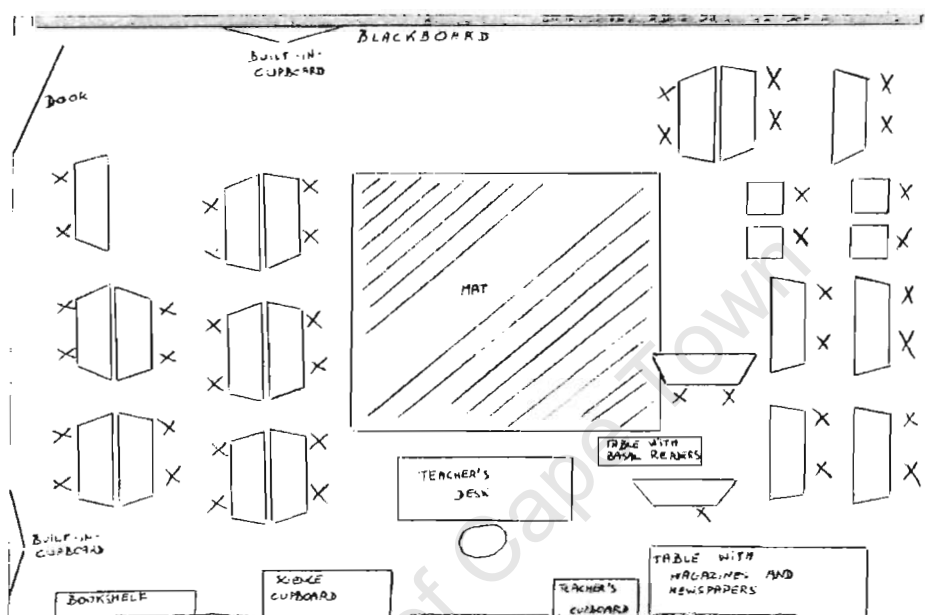


Figure 4.1 Floor plan of the classroom

The books (basal readers), which the children were supposed to read, were placed in piles on a small, low table next to the carpet to make them immediately available for all the learners.

Other available reading material, which consisted of old magazines and newspapers, lay on a table at the back of the class. This reading material, it would seem, was not used for reading during free moments. During some classroom activities these magazines were used to cut out pictures (e.g. healthy food). Against the back wall behind the teacher's desk a bookshelf contained her books (e.g. new textbooks about the curriculum, an atlas), to which the learners were not allowed access. In one unlocked built-in cupboard at the back of the classroom, English textbooks were kept. These books were only taken out when needed, for example, for exercises. Above this cupboard was a shelf with dictionaries and a few biographies about famous South Africans. The cupboard for science material was kept locked.

The general profile showed that the environment was not contributing to creating a reading culture since most of the texts were either stored away and only used for certain activities, e.g. extra English textbooks. The old magazines and newspapers could only be used when the teacher gave permission, for example, when the learners had to find pictures for the lesson about “a balanced diet for human beings”. The basal readers on the table were only accessible with the teacher’s consent after the completion of the learners’ work. As a result, opportunities for reading seemed very limited and reading material seemed, by and large, unavailable.

4.1.2 Learners’ profile

For the learners’ profile, the results of the reading survey and the cloze procedure test were used. In addition, more data was gathered through observations during the initial phase. The cloze procedure test was given to the learners to understand the level of their reading proficiency and competences. The reading survey included questions regarding reading habits, attitudes towards reading and reading preferences.

The results of the cloze procedure test, given to 41 learners (1 did not participate), are indicated in Table 4.1 below. This table indicates the raw reading scores. The learners’ mean score on this test was 18 (out of 36).

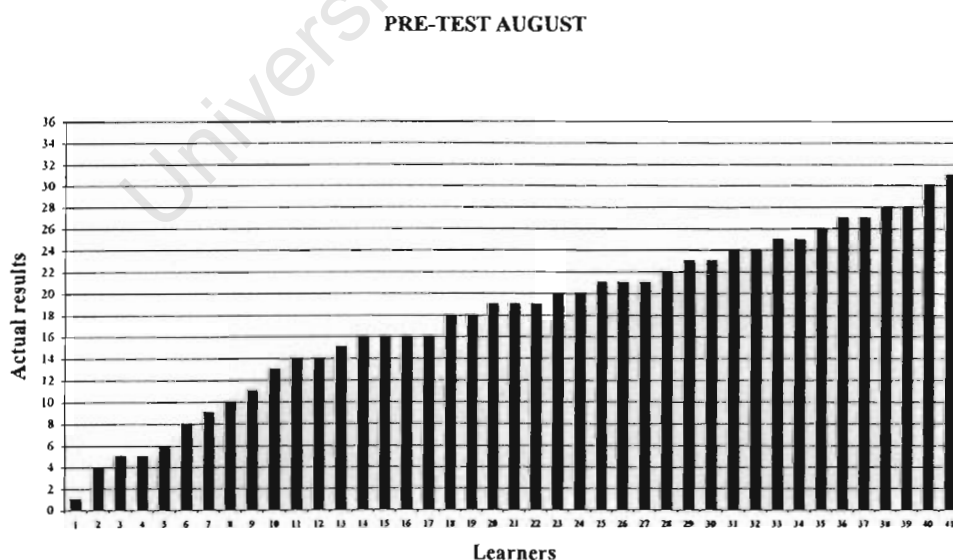


Table 4.1: Pre-test results chart

In order to understand and interpret the results of the cloze procedure test indicated above, I used Rye’s (1982) categorisation framework of reading levels (see 3.6.1.2). Rye distinguishes between three levels of reading ability namely frustration level, instructional level and independent level as indicated in Table 4.2.

Level	Actual Results	Number of learners
Frustration	0-7	5 (12%)
	8-14	7 (17%)
Instructional level	15-18	7 (17%)
	19-21	8 (20%)
Independent level	22-29	12 (29%)
	30-36	2 (5%)

Table 4.2: Results of the pre-test according to Rye’s theory

The first level, “frustration level”, is regarded by Rye as the level in which learners are situated who were not able to make meaning of the cloze procedure test. As Table 4.2 above illustrates, a total of 29% of the learners in this grade six class are positioned within the frustration level.

“The instructional level”, which is the second level of Rye’s categorisation, is considered as the level in which learners still have difficulty making meaning of the passage, but with the assistance of a teacher, these learners might succeed in understanding. As Table 4.2 above indicates 37% of the learners were situated in this level.

The third level described by Rye is the “independent level”. Learners situated at this level can read and make meaning independent of any assistance from significant others. As the results in Table 4.2 above indicate, only 14 learners (34%) of the grade six class were operating on the independent level.

I need to stress two points here. Firstly I tested the learners using only one test (prior to the intervention and again at the end of the research period) and secondly the results cannot claim absolute accuracy. They are only an indication of the possible situation of making meaning. Notwithstanding, these results provided some form of baseline information as an aid to planning the intervention.

The second source of data emanated from the results of the reading survey. As already indicated on the previous page, questions were posed seeking to gain

information about learners’ language background, reading preferences and interests, reading habits and their choice of reading material.

Regarding English as a home language, Table 4.3 below indicates that only 32% of this cohort of learners use English as home language. The same number of learners (29%) respectively speak Afrikaans and Xhosa. Only 7% use both Afrikaans and English in the home environment. This suggests that, while the medium of instruction is English, only a third of the class has English as home language, an aspect that has implications for reading development and the methodologies used in the classroom.

Home Language	Number of learners	%
English	13	32
Afrikaans	12	29
Xhosa	12	29
Afrikaans/English	3	7
No answer	1	3
TOTAL	41	100

Table 4.3: Home language of the grade six learners

What was striking at this initial phase, was that the teacher was also keenly aware of the discontinuity between the home language and the language of instruction.

Thus, while exposure to a multilingual classroom environment is often seen as advantageous, for this group of learners it may have had many disadvantages because, during informal conversations, most of the learners told me they are not able to understand written text in their mother tongue. Not having a good command of the mother tongue in written or oral form has been found to compromise the learners learning a second language or learning through a second language (De Klerk, 2002: 20-26).

When asked about the language they preferred to read in, the majority of the class (81%) stated that they preferred reading English books. Less than 10% of the group (see Table 4.4) suggested that they prefer reading Afrikaans or Xhosa books. It should be noted that this might have more to do with the availability and access to books in other languages than with the learners’ actual preference. They may have

had little opportunity to encounter readable and interesting texts in Afrikaans and Xhosa, hence their preference for English.

	English	Xhosa	Afrikaans	English/ Xhosa	Afrikaans /English
Home language	32% (13)	29% (12)	29% (12)		7% (3)
Language they mostly use to read	81% (33)	2% (1)	10% (4)	5% (2)	2% (1)
Language in which they prefer to read	81% (33)	7% (3)	7% (3)		5% (2)

Table 4.4: Languages used in the reading process

Prior to asking specific questions about the learners’ reading habits and attitudes towards reading in the questionnaire, I sought to gain some general knowledge regarding learners’ reading. The learners’ answers about the environments where reading takes place were not consistent. In this question, as I explained to the learners: “mostly” was defined as the only place where they read; “Sometimes” meant that they read in a certain place, but not consistently; and “Rarely” the place where the learners “never” read. I used the word “never”, because they did not understand “rarely” or “hardly ever”. As the Table 4.5 below suggests, the learners have the habit to read at school “mostly” or “sometimes”, but the school is for most learners not the only place where they read.

	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely
School	27%	32%	7%
Home	20%	20%	12%
Library	12%	20%	15%

Table 4.5 Places where learners read

Another general question revealed the number of books the learners had read since the beginning of 2002. The learners’ answers showed that most of them (66%) had read fewer than ten books since the beginning of the year, and 27% had read more than ten books.

These general questions were followed by more specific questions about the learners’ daily reading habits. Their answers helped me to reconstruct where, when and with whom they spent their reading routine at school and at home. The results revealed that 44% of the learners read for less than ten minutes every day, 32% spent between 10 and twenty minutes daily, and 20% read for more than twenty minutes.

Reading at school happened, according to 41% of the learners, in the afternoon. When probed about where they preferred sitting, 44% of the learners suggested that they preferred to sit on the mat in the middle of the classroom, while 37% stated that they prefer to read at their desks.

Many of the learners (51%) suggested that at home they read only “when [they] finish homework” in the “afternoon”. Some (12%) said that they read before they went to sleep.

So, it seems that reading was perceived as something you do only after “real” work has been completed e.g. after activities at school, after homework or at the end of the day.

In the reading survey, learners were asked who read to them or with them at home. Mothers seemed to be the person who mostly read with the individual learner (32%). Other members of the family do however read sometimes as Table 4.6 below indicates.

Mother	32%	Aunt	12%
Father	17%	Brother	7%
Sister	17%	Uncle	2%
Grandmother	15%	Someone else	10%

Table 4.6: Family members who read aloud for their children

The result above indicates that learners have extended family members who may play a critical role in learners’ reading development if provided with some guidelines.

Learners were also asked about their reading interests and other general topics they were fascinated by and what they might want to read about. The results suggest that the reading interests of the learners are wide-ranging, from comic books to long stories. Table 4.7 indicates that these learners may have been exposed to different genres, an important feature in the process of enhancing reading development.

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely
Comic books	17%	4%	22%	14%
Sport magazines	12%	22%	19%	17%
Newspapers	2%		27%	9%
Short stories	12%	12%	20%	7%
Long stories	15%	19%	22%	2%

Table 4.7: Text genres read by the learners

The learners’ preferred genres⁸ of interest were further clarified in a subsequent question. As shown in Table 4.8 below, action stories and comics were by far the most popular (44%) type of text. Learners also seemed to like drama (34%) and history (34%). Interestingly, non-fiction books were not considered favourably, because only 5% of the learners indicated them as a preference. This result suggests the learners’ awareness of their likes and dislikes, a key consideration when wanting to engage learners meaningfully in their own reading development.

Action	44%
Drama	34%
Action comics	34%
History	34%
Drama comics	29%
Poetry	24%
Plays	24%
Humorous comics/cartoons	20%
Political comics	15%
Fiction	12%
Biographies	10%
Non-fiction	5%

Table 4.8: Preferred genres

⁸ Definitions of the genres from which the learners had to choose their preferences were not given, because the learners seemed to understand what I meant by it. So, I did not explain it to them.

In examining the results, I compared the girls’ interests against what boys said they liked reading. Table 4.9 below indicates that there is a difference in interests between boys and girls in this grade six class. Fashion, swimming and netball are the three outstanding interests within the group of girls. The group of boys seems to have more interest in games like soccer, rugby and cricket, choices that seem to perpetuate gender roles and stereotypes which, while not the focus of the study, need to be pointed out.

	GIRLS	BOYS
Art/craft	29%	20%
Fashion	37%	5%
Cooking	22%	10%
Science	17%	5%
Politics	12%	
Soccer	24%	34%
Rugby	10%	20%
Cricket	20%	27%
Swimming	37%	17%
Tennis	5%	5%
Golf	10%	
Athletics	12%	5%
Netball	46%	
Basketball	14%	5%
Cycling	7%	5%
Karate	12%	2%
Gymnastics	2%	

Table 4.9: Boys/girls’ topics of interest

Although it did not seem that the learners had a lot of choices in the variety of books and readers they read at school, I was interested in the way they picked or would pick a book. Fifty four percent said they chose a book by “browsing through the book” to see if they would like it. Thirty four percent took a book by “looking at the cover” and 29% said that they took “advice from the teacher” to read a certain book. Few learners (27%) read “the summary” on the back cover of the book. Some

learners suggested other reasons for reading a book, for example “I read the book that my mother reads”, “I open a book and I read it” and another pupil suggested, “I like to see if it has a lot of words”.

In summary, the test and the reading survey illuminated several issues regarding the reading level and development in this grade six class.

One of the aspects related to the learners’ different language backgrounds and suggests that learners use their mother tongue (Afrikaans, Xhosa or a mix of Afrikaans and English) at home, while they use English as medium of instruction in the classroom. While one third of the learners are English first language speakers, the other two third of the learners seemed “communicatively competent” in their mother tongue (which they use at home), but they said they could not read in their mother tongue. The learners were taught in English, with their mother tongue often presented as a subject (as second or third language).

Another observation made it clear that there were few appropriate books available that addressed learners’ preferences, needs, likes or dislikes. This concern emphasises the need for relevant books and even more the need for Afrikaans and Xhosa books which were not available. It seemed to be an important aspect causing the learners lack of skill to read independently.

Even the results of the reading survey show a worrying reading pattern. In the first eight months of 2002, 66% had read an average of one book every three weeks. For 76% learners it showed that they read less than twenty minutes daily.

I observed that reading was a part of the classroom activities, but it did not seem to be taken “seriously”. This observation was confirmed by what learners said about when they read.

4.1.3 Teaching conditions

The teaching conditions described in this section were recorded through observations and an interview with the grade six teacher. This section describes the teacher’s actions, her teaching style, and her attitude towards reading.

In this first part, I focus on my observations, where I recorded the teacher’s actions. On several occasions, the teacher was not present in the classroom due to her responsibilities as head of the intermediate phase. For example, she was responsible for giving grade four their work when their teacher was only able to come to school at 9.00 am instead of 8.00 am during the first term of the school year. This happened

before the grade six teacher was able to attend to her own learners. This pattern also occurred in August 2002, when another teacher was ill. The grade six teacher was responsible for solving this situation and had to give the learners work until a parent-volunteer was called to supervise the learners. As I observed in my field notes:

“N. went to grade 4 class to get some of the learners, because their teacher is ill...After a few minutes she comes back” 8.15am on 19 August 2002.

During my fieldwork (August-September 2002), I observed that the teacher would stay downstairs for a while after intervals or she would leave the classroom to make copies or phone calls due to other responsibilities such as being the coordinator of a historical exhibition organised at the school. Often other teachers would come and disturb her during her teaching to enquire about certain issues. I recorded this as follows:

“While the learners were busy, N. disappears to make a phone call and copies”
15 August 2002

“N. phone rings...runs to grade 5 classroom...[later] The grade 4 teacher comes in and chats with N. while the learners are working and talking”
19 August 2002

“Grade 5 teacher comes in the classroom and disrupts the lesson by asking the learners questions about their transport and he starts discussing it with them [later] other children take advantage to talk when principal enters the classroom” 21 August 2002

“N. goes downstairs with one of the learners [to the principal’s office]”
27 August 2002

On occasions when the teacher was absent, the learners would chat, play and run around in the classroom. During the teacher’s absence the learners could have been given the opportunity to exercise their reading skills. If they had had books available in the classroom and with appropriate guidance, most of them could have used the time to become more independent readers and manage their reading but these opportunities seemed to have been missed.

I also looked at the teacher’s approach to teaching and reading in particular, with a view to understanding how these factors shaped learners’ reading engagement. In most cases, the teacher applied a rather non-interactive style of teaching combined with a few interactive aspects. In practice, this means that most of the talking was

done by the teacher, who gave instructions without interference or questioning from the learners' side. Below is an example of an incident.

According to my notes on 19 August, the learners were asked to complete one vocabulary exercise to learn how they should use a dictionary and afterwards, she said to them: "you will know the meaning of 30 new words, when you finish your work". This exercise started at 8.30 am and was finished at 11.25 am. The learners had to sit in groups (due to shortage of dictionaries and textbooks), but had to complete the exercise individually. At the start of the exercise, the learners "may not disturb the teacher during the explanation" and the teacher "gives them instructions to distribute the English textbooks and dictionaries...the learners look puzzled and don't know what to do, although the teacher already explained it...she writes the whole exercise on the blackboard". The teacher had read the exercise aloud several times and explained what they needed to do by writing down an example. "N. repeats several times...they first have to write the whole exercise and then they can find out what the words mean through the dictionary".

When this introduction (more or less 30 minutes) was completed, the teacher sat down at her desk. Some learners had questions regarding the task, so they had to go to the teacher's desk for assistance. From time to time the teacher would do a walk around the classroom and help the learners.

Even though some learners had not finished the exercise, they would chat and disturb others. According to my general observations and the teacher's statements in the interview, those were the learners who actually needed most help and were labelled "problem learners". The teacher offered to answer the learners' questions, but as long as they did not ask questions, the teacher would not help them. The learners who finished their work neatly and correctly were used as "good" examples. Others who made a mistake received negative comments. The learners who seemed to struggle most, gave the impression that they perceived the task as irrelevant or non-challenging.

Sometimes the learners were given the chance to work in groups because the teacher was aware that they liked it very much. During those group work sessions the learners who struggled were helped by others. When group work happened (only recorded twice during my observations), the teacher did not always organise it beforehand. So, it often ended in a chaotic situation as illustrated in following example.

Normally the teacher would divide the groups, but on this occasion the learners could make their own groups, because the teacher decided on the spot that “they have project time now”, only because they still had half an hour left, so they could brainstorm. In my diary on 20 August, I wrote: “They have to create their own story and write their own dialogues. They have to make their own puppets at home”. The learners seemed to be very excited and the noise level rose very quickly. It was the end of the day, so a lot of learners preferred to talk about things other than “puppets”. The teacher warned them several times that they should discuss their groups work activity more quietly and eventually she decided to stop the “exercise”, because the learners were not working on the project. “N. sends G. to the principal’s office, A. has to sit on the desk and has to read a book...R. has to stand in the corner at the door...learners need to be completely quiet till the bell rings...S. goes downstairs to empty the bin”.

From time to time, the teacher engaged in a more interactive approach, which she enjoyed, in order to introduce a new topic for one of the subjects (e.g. History) or just to get the learners talking. On one of these occasions, the teacher introduced the learners to a text about Robben Island (History) as in following example.

The teacher gathered the learners closely around her on the mat. On one occasion for example (19 August) she asked the learners to imagine how they would feel if they could not hug, play or even see other children. “The learners are very keen on giving their opinion by sticking their fingers in the air”. This introduction led them to a text about the prisoners of Robben Island (History). The link between the “reality” of the learners and the “curriculum activity” made it more relevant and imaginable for the learners.

These interactive moments happened mostly at the end of the day and did not always aim to introduce a new topic. At times, the teacher would organise these talks to initiate open discussions to stimulate the learners to think critically or create their opinion about certain topics. For example, on 20 August the teacher explained to the learners why stories are told (especially in the oral tradition and the history of District Six). She referred to the performance of American storytellers, which they had attended a few days earlier (15 August 2002). The teacher allowed some of the learners to come forward and role-play their favourite story.

In the interview with the teacher I paid attention to the teacher’s perception of reading and how she organised it in the classroom. The teacher stated during the

interview that she perceived reading as “very important”. She said that the teachers of the intermediate phase had had a meeting in December 2001 about the teaching focus for 2002. They decided to make reading a priority in 2002, “what we would do during the year and there was a concern amongst the teachers that reading in grade 4,5 and 6 it needs to take more time...it needs to be devoted more time in the class and we actually want to do it as a phase project”.

However, my observations revealed that most of the concerns and intentions mentioned by the teacher in the interview did not always happen as such. Through informal conversations, the teacher expressed that she was not happy that this “reading project” never took place. She briefly explained to me that “we supposed to have a time to read every day ...we don’t have time every day...So, the reading is sort of fitted in...the other things”. So, reading became a part of other subjects, e.g. Life Orientation.

In the interview, the teacher emphasised the importance of reading for pleasure, even though this did not seem to be borne out in the classroom. She suggested that the learners should enjoy books not only related to the classroom activities, but for pleasure, as the following excerpt illustrates: “I like them sometimes to just read the stories, the joy of reading...feel that book in their hand...just for the pleasure of reading. ... I let them read like that, by themselves on the mat”.

During my observations I noticed that the learners were not always given “free choice” to read. I noticed that the learners waited for instructions on whether they could take a book or not. As written down in my journal on Thursday 15 August: “if they completed [class work]...they had to hand it in and take a book from the table and sit on the carpet”. On Monday 19 August, I noted “the children who are finished have to sit on the mat and take a reader...the teacher repeated it several times”.

The teacher would sometimes use reading as punishment as I recorded on two occasions, e.g. “A. has to sit on the desk and has to read a book” (20 August 2002), “G. did not behave in his group, so N. put him separately and he has to read a reader silently on a desk” (27 August 2002). This practice it would seem may have contributed to these grade six learners perceiving reading as punishment.

I assume that the learners did not often engage in reading, because there was a limited number of interesting and relevant texts available in the classroom, and these were limited in variety. Only a small number of books were available (ten basal readers of each book). According to the teacher, “they share and rotate...because,

instead of having forty books of the same they have access to more different reading material". The basal readers were not challenging for the pupils, too easy for some and obviously not appealing for others. Some learners told me (during informal conversations) that those basal readers were too boring.

In the interview, the teacher stated that there was a classroom library and a school library. I would not have described the books in the classroom as a library, because there were few texts and little variety available.

Notwithstanding the shortage of relevant reading material, the learners seemed to be aware of different text genres. The teacher stated that they had been working with newspapers (e.g. the period that Mark Shuttleworth went into space) and she introduced the learners to poetry using her own material (Oprah magazine). So, she seemed aware of the lack of sufficient and challenging reading material and attempted in a limited way, to compensate through the use of newspaper and magazines.

One of the reasons why a non-interactive style of teaching was used may have to do with the large number of learners (42), which could place a burden on teachers and implicitly encourage rather than discourage non-interactive styles of teaching. It would seem that with more teacher-led lessons she would have better control over the large group of learners.

On the occasions when an interactive approach was used, learners would be allowed to work in groups and there would be more talking. They had the chance to voice their opinions and feelings and at the same time they would help each other. The learners seemed to enjoy these discussions more than the above-mentioned non-interactive approach, where learners' input was limited.

The way the teacher perceived reading was not completely put into practice as I observed. Mainly, reading seemed to be fitted into other subjects, which is all right, but other than that there were few opportunities for learners to read for pleasure.

The teacher seemed to control the learners' reading process. She told them when to read and often what to read (basal readers). They could only read after they finished their work, which meant that the "slowest" workers (and in most cases those were the learners who did have problems with learning and also with reading) thus did not have much chance to read books.

4.1.4 *Summary of the initial phase results*

The results of the classroom profile, learners' profile and the teaching conditions, discussed in this first section, revealed several concerns.

The learners, having different language backgrounds (Xhosa, Afrikaans, English or mix of Afrikaans/English), were taught in an environment that was not very conducive to reading, where little variety and availability of books was evident.

Although the learners indicated that they had certain preferences regarding the genres of text, such as action comics, history and drama, these genres were absent in the classroom. I have no evidence that learners' interests had been identified prior to my intervention, since very little of the learners' preferences were reflected in the available texts in the classroom, which consisted mainly of basal readers and old newspapers and magazines.

In the survey, the learners stated that they preferred to read in English, but as I observed, there were no texts available in any other languages. The availability of text was not the only concern that was raised in my observations, but there seemed little room for learners to take control of their own reading development. The teacher told the learners when to read and often what to read. The learners' reading process was managed by the teacher and they did not have free choice. The evidence suggests that they considered reading as a classroom activity related to the subjects they were taught, and not necessarily as something to do for pleasure. My observations revealed that reading was often treated as something you do "after completing the main work" in the classroom or even at home and in some cases it was used as punishment. So, it was not considered by the learners as a "serious" curriculum focus.

These observations were key in helping me understand what was required in the intervention phase if there was to be any improvement in the reading conditions in this grade six classroom.

The next section will describe how the main research period was planned using the data gathered in the initial phase, so as to enhance the existing reading conditions in the grade six classroom.

4.2 **Description of the main research period**

Through the data gathered in the initial phase, I extracted three main challenges that I needed to focus on to create opportunities for the enhancement of the reading conditions in the grade six classroom. The part of the main research period in

which I enhanced the reading conditions, called the intervention, took place from the 9th until 23rd September.

The first challenge that needed to be addressed in this period was to change the physical conditions in the classroom, thereby making the environment more literacy-rich. A second challenge was to provide more books that were varied in content and genre. A third important challenge was to create tasks to stimulate the learners' reading engagement, particularly reading for pleasure.

As a result, I undertook three main actions that constituted the intervention. Firstly, I changed the physical conditions in the classroom by creating a literacy-rich environment. This I did by hanging posters on the classroom walls with stories, newspaper headlines, poems, cartoons and pictures of Roald Dahl's story "George's marvellous medicine". I also used posters about reading from the Sunday Times and I made a "top five" list of favourite books by asking the learners about the favourite books that they had read and would recommend to friends.

Cambourne (1988) inspired me to organise the second action with his suggestion that learners should be immersed in a classroom where a variety of books is available as this might enhance the learners' engagement in reading activities. Therefore, I organised with the "Rare books and Special Collections" library at UCT to borrow 172 children's books for two weeks. I assumed that, among these books, each learner would find something which met their interests he/she had indicated in the reading survey. The books (see appendix 4) were mainly in English, but I had also selected some Afrikaans and Xhosa books. There was a broad variety of genre: non-fiction, poetry, plays, history, action comics and other genres.

As a third action I designed and gave prediction and sequencing activities to the learners. I did this because I assumed that the learners would need some guidance and extra training to improve their reading skills in order to stimulate their independent reading. For the prediction activity, the learners were asked to use their prior knowledge in order to write a newspaper article about a certain topic (displayed in the newspaper title they chose). Prior to the actual writing, a discussion took place where the learners came forward with their perception of how a newspaper is put together. Learners and I developed a set of criteria or features of a newspaper, and discussed articles found in the newspaper. This discussion provided them with ideas of how to write their own newspaper articles in fields I knew they had an interest in.

Learners could make a choice from several topics (e.g. swimming, hiking, media, history, political and international news).

In the sequencing activity, groups of learners worked on a specific task. They had to rearrange jumbled paragraphs of a story so that it made sense. They had done a similar activity organised by the teacher while I was doing my observations and they seemed to enjoy that kind of task. I selected six different stories around the same theme, “the hare”, and gave closed envelopes randomly to each of the groups.

Finally, the main research period was concluded with a second reading survey, a cloze procedure test (same as in the initial phase) at the beginning of October and interviews with seven learners that were recorded on the 15th October 2002. This concluding period I refer to as, “the final phase” of the research. In the next section the results of this final phase are described in relation to the results of the initial phase and the data gathered during the intervention and the final phase.

4.3 Results of the main research period

The data gathered during the intervention through observations, note taking and learners’ completed work, and during the final phase through reading survey and cloze procedure test (post-test) and interviews, are reported in this section.

The results presented in this section are divided in three main sections: the results of the comparison of the cloze procedure tests (change in reading level), the themes emerging from the gathered data and the text analysis of learners’ written work. In examining learners’ written work, text analysis was used as a tool to find cues learners used to make meaning of the text.

4.3.1 The Cloze procedure test

Forty-one pupils completed the post-test. The results (see appendix 7) of cloze procedure test 2 (the post-test) suggest a general improvement of the learners’ reading proficiency. In the first test, learners obtained a mean score of 18, while in the post-test they obtained a mean score of 22. As Table 4.10 below indicates, there were some shifts within and also between the three levels.

Level	Actual Results	Number of learners	
		Pre-test	Post-test
Frustration level	0-7	5 (12%)	4 (10%)
	8-14	7 (17%)	2 (5%)
Instructional level	15-18	7 (17%)	3 (7%)
	19-21	8 (20%)	5 (12%)
Independent level	22-29	12 (29%)	20 (49%)
	30-36	2 (5%)	7 (17%)

Table 4.10: Results of the pre-test and post-test

Five learners who were situated in the frustration level obtained an actual score between zero and seven in the pre-test. Four of those five learners did not improve their scores in the post-test. They stayed in the same level, as they were still not able to make meaning of the paragraph. Most of the learners who had an actual score between eight and fourteen in the pre-test moved to the instructional level, which is one step closer to independence.

In total 29% of the learners were situated in the frustration level in the pre-test, whereas in the post-test only 15% obtained scores within this range. So, six learners obtained 15 or more as actual result and therefore shifted to the instructional level, which was a qualitatively significant shift. In the instructional level those learners will be able to read with assistance of a “mentor” to avoid frustration.

In the pre-test 37% of the learners were situated in the instructional level. This percentage decreased in the post-test as only 19% were categorized in this level. So, the most obvious shift took place between the instructional and independent level. As we can see in the results table below only 34% initially obtained scores in the independent level, whereas in the post-test the amount of learners increased to 66%.

While the results are pleasing, the researcher is aware that the results in the post-test might have been a consequence of the general changes that had occurred in the reading environment as well as the influence of the researcher’s presence. Notwithstanding this, the results do however suggest that generally there was a significant improvement in the reading levels caused by the enhancement of the reading conditions during the intervention, an improvement that gives hope for teachers who read this work.

4.3.2 *Themes emerging from the results of the main research period*

Using the data from my observation notes, interviews with the learners and the second reading survey the following themes emerged: enjoyment and interest, variety of text, a changing reading culture and risk taking.

4.3.2.1 Enjoyment and interest

Within this category, two trends seemed to emerge from the data. The first trend relates to the excitement regarding the availability, easy access and variety of books and the second trend reflects the changing attitude and the reading habits.

Regarding the first trend, the learners seemed to be very enthusiastic and excited about the number, variety and access to all the books brought into the classroom. They described the situation as follows: “the classroom was full of books”, “there were more books than before”, “the class was more alive”, “there were lots of books that I could read”, “There was books that I could read”, “I did see pictures in the classroom. I did see newspaper on the walls”, “the classroom was full of books and pictures”, “there was books to read”, “the classroom looked nice with the library” and “there were posters and lovely books”.

As I observed and wrote down in my field notes during the intervention on Tuesday 10 September “When the children saw all the books they were very excited and they reacted very positively about the posters [that I had put up on the walls]. They immediately started reading and looking at the books”.

Some learners answered in the first survey that they did not like reading, but the survey after the intervention showed that those learners liked reading, “because of the books” that were brought into the classroom. Further elaboration was given during the interview as the following quote suggests.

A: “...in the questionnaire you said you do not like reading?”

P3: “Yes Miss, but I **liked**⁹ the books...”

A: “The ones that I brought into the classroom?”

P3: “Yes Miss”

Another learner, whose mother tongue is Afrikaans yet prefers to read in English, because it is “easier”, had this to say:

A: “In the questionnaire you told me, you actually tried to read in Afrikaans?”

⁹ my emphasis

P1: “Yes Miss”

A: “You read in Afrikaans and did you like those books?”

P1: “Yes Miss”

A: “Did you like them more than the English books?”

P1: “Not really, but **those were nice Afrikaans books**¹⁰...”

These examples suggest that it was not necessarily *that* the learners did not enjoy or want to read, but rather that *what* was available (variety and access) influenced their engagement and also their attitude towards reading. The available books, which were brought in the classroom during the intervention, are the books these specific learners *liked* and *those were nice books*, books they had an interest in reading.

The given examples show us that the first trend of “showing enthusiasm and excitement” is linked with the second trend about “changing attitudes towards reading”. The learners’ attitudes towards reading changed as stated in the reading surveys, because prior to the intervention, some said they did not like reading and afterwards they answered they liked reading due to the books that were made available.

The second trend illustrates the change in atmosphere and attitude towards reading. It seemed that learners were generally more quiet and settled than before the intervention. The first day of the intervention (9 September 2002) I wrote in my field notes about the learners “they seem very interested and more quiet than usual”. The learners seemed to sit on the mat voluntarily after a test or an exercise more often than I had observed before the intervention and they started reading books without being prompted to do so.

I was not the only one to observe the learners’ change in attitude. The learners themselves noticed, not only the material differences, but a difference in the reading attitude of their friends and classmates as these comments suggest; “everyone was reading a book”, “the last two weeks I had fun reading”, “Everyone was able to read in class”, “children were always reading a book”, “I saw a lot of children running up and down to get a book”.

In general the learners had a more open attitude towards reading, as it became an activity based on the learners’ choice to participate. Therefore the complete

¹⁰ my emphasis

classroom atmosphere changed as the learners had the chance to read whatever was available, and what they *preferred* and *liked*.

4.3.2.2 Variety of texts

Once books were available during the intervention, I observed that the learners read more. In addition, having access to a variety of books resulted in the opportunity for learners to exercise choice. Choice meant that the learners read books for enjoyment and not only because they had to, but because e.g. “I like stories about animals”, “it was full of cartoons”, “there is a lot of adventures in the book”. They could read what they liked and gave reasons such as: “fun and exciting”, “it was wonderful”, “it was a good book to read”, “it teaches us good things”, “it was very nice and it was like a movie” or “I like soccer” as reasons for the choices they made.

I compared the preferred genres (before the intervention) with the genres they had read during the intervention, as shown in Table 4.11 below. As indicated, the learners did not seem to increase their interest in newspapers, although they had been using them in class to find information for certain projects (e.g. Mark Shuttleworth). Even during the intervention, I used newspaper articles in the prediction activity, which most of them enjoyed. So, I assume that they linked newspapers with classroom activities and not necessarily with reading for pleasure.

	Preferred genres (stated in reading survey - initial phase)	Actually read books (stated in reading survey - final phase)
Comic Books	17%	17%
Soccer magazines	12%	24%
Newspaper	2%	5%
Long Stories	15%	2%
Short stories	12%	41%
Poetry	24%	27%
Biographies	10%	7%
Theatre plays	24%	10%
History	34%	34%

Table 4.11: Genres of text the learners preferred and actually read

Soccer magazines seemed to be read more during the intervention period than as indicated in the initial phase. Some learners (according to the teacher) were not used to having these magazines available or they did not know that they existed, which may have accounted for their increased interest. So, the learners who had indicated “soccer” as one of their favourite sports in the initial phase, showed a high interest in these magazines.

While reading soccer magazines seemed to have increased dramatically, theatre plays and long stories did not attract many learners. Only 10% had read theatre plays. I assume though that they might have confused it with “role play” which they sometimes did in the classroom.

It seemed difficult for learners to read long stories, because they did not have the chance to finish reading those stories at school. The books were only available for two weeks and could only be read in the classroom. Firstly, they did not have the time to read these long stories. Secondly, such stories require more concentration, which was not always possible in a busy class of 42 learners.

Short stories seemed to be preferred by 12% of the learners prior to the intervention, but 41% actually read these in the intervention phase. According to my observations they preferred books with lots of pictures, as I wrote in my journal (11 September 2002). “S. takes a comic book and start drawing the pictures...G. takes a book about trains and together with A. he is looking and pointing at the pictures...M. looks interested at the cartoons...”.

An interesting spin-off of the intervention was the process learners engaged with in making choices about what book to read. According to their reports in the second reading survey, many of the learners (44%) read the summary at the back of the book or they browsed through the book (34%). Some looked at the cover (15%) and interestingly, some (15%) took a book that was recommended by a friend.

During the intervention, the learners were invited to read whenever there was time and they could make their own choices. Having a variety of books gave them the chance to make their own choices and manage their own reading process as part of being/becoming an independent reader.

4.3.2.3 Towards a changed reading culture

During the intervention the learners gave the impression of taking more responsibility for their own reading process. The change in their reading habits was

an aspect of the general reading culture. The changed reading culture seemed to happen on three levels: choice, sharing and time spent on reading.

Regarding choice change was evident on two levels. On the one level learners made choices and influenced each other through recommending books to each other. On another level, they exercised choice with regards to the type of books that they read. In the second survey the learners seemed to prefer soccer magazines and short stories.

Secondly, it would seem that there was a change in reading arrangements and patterns since there was some evidence of reading becoming a shared activity, as I noted in my field notebook on several occasions. The learners seemed to see reading as a collective activity and discussion of the books took place within groups of learners, while they were sharing a book and showing each other the pictures as is illustrated in the following excerpts from my field notebook:

“D. shares his book with other children”

“G. reads the sport magazines together with M.”, 11 September 2002

“O. was reading silently...children were laying on the mat to read.” 12 September 2002

“T. is reading poetry with another learner...” 16 September 2002

“O. was reading aloud for L., S. and N...” 18 September 2002

“the children are discussing the right order of the text...they are laughing with their friends...” 20 September 2002.

“Reading together” and helping each other to read created a better understanding between learners from different language backgrounds an unintended outcome prevalent during this phase. In the interviews with some pupils during the final phase, one pupil stated:

A: “I saw in the questionnaire that you tried to read books in Xhosa?”

P4: “I tried to read”

A: “Did you understand it?”

P4: “I asked **help to other people**¹¹.”

Another pupil answered:

A: “In what language did you try to read as well?”

P6: “In Xhosa”

A: “How did you read it?”

¹¹ my emphasis

P6: “I read it and looked at the pictures and I got **help from the others**¹².”

Xhosa-speaking children usually have to speak English (and even Afrikaans) on a daily basis, because it is the medium of instruction in the classroom. It is a situation of “sink or swim” in the classroom. English and Afrikaans learners who tried to read Xhosa books understood the difficulties that Xhosa learners have to face every day in school. As some learners explained during the interview, they had to ask for help in order to understand the book that they were trying to read. Asking for help and working together might lead to a classroom where teamwork is more important than competition, where learners begin to develop empathy for those who struggle with English.

Lastly, the aspect of time played an important role in this theme as well, that is, the time spent on reading books voluntarily. The learners reported when they read voluntarily during the intervention period: fifty six percent stated that they read after they had completed an activity, 37% when they entered the classroom in the morning and 7% took a book whenever they had free time.

My observations support this. In my field notes (9 September 2002) I wrote, “The learners enter the classroom. They look at the posters and other material on the walls and start reading it.” And on another occasion (12 September 2002) I recorded, “They saw that [the teacher] was not at school yet. As soon as they came into the classroom they ran to the books and started reading”.

Other reading moments took place whenever they finished a test, group work or any other given task, for example, “After the History test they went to the cupboard to fetch a book and then sat silently at their desk or on the mat to read until everybody was finished”. 13 September 2002

4.3.2.4 Risk taking

It is actually remarkable that the learners reacted positively and enthusiastically, because after all, the available books were new to them. Every day they would voluntarily go and choose books to read. For example, on Wednesday 11 September, I wrote, “The children were going automatically towards the cupboard...the children start reading”.

¹² my emphasis

At the beginning of the intervention, I explained to them that they could read as much as they wanted and what they wanted. There was no competition attached to this two week-intervention. I made it clear that they would not be assessed or graded, so their reading was completely voluntary. According to the second reading survey, most learners read between 5 and 15 books during the two weeks (mostly short stories). In practice, they read between 0.5 and 2.5 books a day. According to my observations the learners changed books regularly. “M. takes George’s marvellous medicine, he goes to his seat and start browsing through the book. He puts it back. He looks at the Afrikaans books, takes a book about trains, afterwards he takes a book about space...” 12 September 2002.

Making choices involves “risk taking”, but this risk taking went far beyond just taking the risk to make choices and to read. Prior to the intervention little reading material, which was low in complexity, was available in the classroom. So, during the intervention the learners did not seem to fear to engage in reading different genres and books with a higher complexity (i.e. soccer magazines, short stories). Some learners were even “brave” enough to take the risk of reading books in different languages.

Although they had access to a variety of books in Afrikaans and Xhosa, most pupils (83%) however, reported that they read English books, as we can see in the Table 4.12 below.

	English	Afrikaans	Xhosa	Afrikaans/ Xhosa	English/ Xhosa	Afrikaans/ English
Language they used mostly in reading	83%				7%	10%
Language they tried to read ¹³	17%	37%	20%	12%	2%	

Table 4.12: Languages used in reading

¹³ 2% did not answer this question.

In the interviews, P1 claimed that Afrikaans is more difficult to read, although it is her home language "...Because English is easy to read, Afrikaans is more difficult...". P3 stated that Afrikaans is easier to read "...I read in both languages [English and Afrikaans] ... I find Afrikaans more easy...". Even though they had access to books in their mother tongue during the intervention, I assume that learners considered reading in their mother tongue (Afrikaans or Xhosa) as too much of a risk, because they were not used to this. In some cases, Xhosa learners were not able to read in Xhosa as some of them mentioned in through informal conversations.

The themes that emerged from the data gathered in the main research period suggest that all the trends seemed to be intertwined. Although discussed separately, we cannot disconnect the availability and variety of text from the reading culture and risk taking.

It seemed that the availability, easy access and the variety of books not only caused excitement, but I observed a change in attitude. The learners were more settled and quieter than usual. Actually, the complete reading culture changed. They took the risk to start reading, because they had the choice to read and could choose their own books. They read together (with each other and for each other). They also helped each other with reading, even in languages other than their mother tongue, which minimized the risk of reading books in different languages.

4.3.3 *Text Analysis of learners' written work*

In the following section the learners' written work is analysed and discussed to reveal how the learners tried to make meaning in the different activities. They completed two tasks. For the first, the prediction task, learners were given titles from newspapers for which they had to write their own article. For the sequencing task they worked in groups. Each group was given a story that had been cut in paragraphs and jumbled. The learners had to arrange the paragraphs in such a way that the story "made sense", which does not necessarily mean that they had to put it in its original order.

Three main themes emerged from the text analysis of the two activities. These include context related cues, lexical cues and miscues.

4.3.3.1 Context related cues

Within this theme of context related cues I focused mainly on two categories, namely, the use of prior knowledge and the writing style in the prediction task. Prior knowledge refers to the learners' knowledge that they used (or could have used) to make an informed guess in order to make meaning.

As regards to the first category, the learners had free choice to pick one of the following newspaper titles to write the article: "Afronaut Mark stops traffic but gets learners going", "Welcome back Natalie", "The many faces of Desmond Dube", "The story of Sarah Bartmann" and "Couple held for murder of missing girls". The learners who choose the same topic were put together in one group, hence five groups were created.

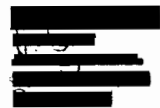
From their work, I examined how the use of prior knowledge was expressed in the different groups. At one level, it could be detected in the manner in which the learners made use of the title. Four groups only wrote about the protagonist whose name was mentioned in the title (Mark Shuttleworth, Natalie DuToit, Desmond Dube and Sarah Bartmann). They seemed to ignore the rest of the title, some indication of only writing about something they were familiar with. Below are the examples from four groups that illustrate the above. These excerpts illustrate how the protagonist is viewed (heroic, role-model status) by the learners. It also illustrates how the learners focused on what they knew and left the rest of the title, by and large, unattended.

Life History

- 1 Mark Shuttleworth grew up with his parents. he went to the university of Cape Town. He studied business and computer technology. When he was working, he went to work for Independent news paper, where he started in the IT department. After eighteen months, Mark was fired by the Managing director. The director's name is Rory Wilson. He told him "his IT department is no good". Then started surfing the internet from his parents garage where he found away to set @ computers verification. This enterprise was spotted by an American company, who then offered to buy his business, for the sum of 575 million dollars.
- 15 That made him famous at the age of 26 for each of the people who worked for him, including tea lady, cleaner and the gardener.
- He gave a gift of one million rand each. He then started an IT business in Cape Town.
- 20 And is currently funding the Hip to be square campaign, to interest children in science and mathematics. After moving to England, he approached the Russian space program. To travel to the International space program. The Russian space program, which is partly funded, accepted him for a cost of plus minus twenty million dollars. For several months he underwent vigorous training including how to speak Russian language. This may be the first
- 30 African to travel to space. He did not just want to be a space tourist and wanted to perform experiments up there. One of which was to study the AIDS virus. The results of these
- 34 tests have yet to be concluded.

Group 1: "Afronaut Mark stops traffic but gets learners going"

The History of Natalie du Toit



- 1 Natalie du Toit was a great swimmer.
- She started her career from a young age. 4 years when she turned 19 she was in a terrible accident. She was about 2 months in hospital; and when she got her results she was devastated. She thought about losing her career of swimming. She thought that she had to swim with disabled people but she did not give up hope and went on training with the national S.A team.
- 10 People use to ask her what happened to her leg. She told them about the terrible accident. She also received two gold medals from the common wealth games.
- She also received a award for the encourage swimmer of the Common Health Games. When she
- 15 Come back from the common Health games they welcomed her back.

WELCOME BACK NATALIE

WELL DONE NATALIE!!

Group 2: "Welcome back Natalie"

In both group 1 and 2 examples Mark Shuttleworth and Natalie DuToit are portrayed according to a similar “hero image”, especially in the following lines (the given number refers to the number of the line mentioned in the articles above):

Group 1:

- 15 “famous at the age of 26”
- 20-21 “funding the Hip to be Square campaign”
- 29-30 “the first African to travel to space”
- 32-33 “perform experiments up there...to study the Aids virus”

Group 2:

- 6 “losing her career of swimming”
- 7 “swim with disabled people”
- 8 “she did not give up hope”

To illustrate the first group’s prior knowledge on Mark Shuttleworth’s “success story”, we can take a look at the details in the article. Their meticulous description illustrates the amount of knowledge these learners had gathered about the life of Mark Shuttleworth prior to the task. They obviously had a lot of prior knowledge about this man as shown in following lines.

- 3 “studied business and computer technology”
- 14 “the sum of 575 millions”
- 16-18 “for each of the people who worked with him...tea lady, cleaner, gardener...a million rand each”
- 20-21 “is currently funding the hip to be square campaign”
- 22 “after moving to England”

The second group who wrote about Natalie DuToit used the same style as the Shuttleworth-group, but showed less detailed knowledge of their “hero”, because they do not inform the reader what the cause of her accident was, except very indirectly in line 10, as illustrated in following lines.

- 3-4 “she was in a terrible accident”
- 5-7 “she was about 2 months in hospital; and when she got her results she was devastated. She thought about losing her career of swimming”
- 10 “People use to ask her what happened to her leg”
- 12 “she also received received two gold medals from the common wealth games”

The Natalie DuToit group realised at the end of their article that they had to take the whole title into consideration, which was the given task. So, in the last

sentence the learners tried to fit in the part of the title “welcome back” as they wrote in line 14-16, “When she came back from the common wealth games they welcomed her back”.

At the time of the writing of these articles, both Mark Shuttleworth and Natalie DuToit had been on TV and in the newspapers. The learners seemed to have gathered this prior knowledge and used it effectively in the article.

The third group also wrote about the protagonist in their article, “Desmond Dube”. They specifically focused on Desmond Dube’s personal life in considerable detail. However, they do not tell us how Desmond ended up on TV from being a street kid, as illustrated in the following examples:

1 “Desmond Dube was a street kid”

2 “he ran away”

16-17 “the people love like his program”

In a similar way as the previous groups did, they focused on one part of the title “Desmond Dube”. It seemed that they were more interested in his family life, because it was probably the only information they had about him using their prior knowledge, which is illustrated as follows:

3 “he met a lady her name was Lettie and then they fall in love”

6 “tree months leter his wife relied that was pregnant and she told Desmond Dube that she was pregnant”

10 “it was a boy”

11 “when his baby boy was about six years old she was pregnant with another child”

12 “their names was Thabo and pinky “

the many faces of Desmond Dube

- 1 Desmond Dube was a street kid because his parents abused him and he could not cope with it so he ran away after that year's taken he met a lady her name was Lettie and then they fall in love and married together
- 5 and went to school and finished school and he went to pentecost and learned about comedy news three months later his wife realised that was pregnant and she told Desmond Dube that she was pregnant and Desmond Dube was so excited that he asked it was a boy or
- 10 a girl but it was a girl so he carried on with his show when his baby boy was about six years old she was pregnant with another child the baby was a girl their names were Thabis and pinky and when they grow up they went to boarding school and Desmond
- 15 Dube carried on with his program with his children and he was happy and the people love like
- 17 his program

Group 3: "The many faces of Desmond Dube"

THE STORY OF SARAH BARTMANN

- 1 Sarah Bartmann was born in 1789 in the Cape Province. She lived on a small land with many Khoisan people she worked as a slave, the Dutch bought her to work for them because she was a strong woman. The Dutch traded her to a Dutch (person) from Europe exhibition her body in a museum. And years later she became a prostitute that was the way the
 - 10 Dutch men abused her. There was a fair bit of argument about whether, after, all it was necessary to pass a law, and some back-biting about the state and status of the national collection. It was argued.
 - 15 that as much as Bartmann's humanness made it unconscionable to own her who might in future pop up and say that Egyptian mummies and people should be returned to Egypt
 - 20 Sarah Bartmann is a true South African and she was a freedom fighter she should be treated with respect.
- and she died in 1819 in Paris.

Group 4: "The story of Sarah Bartmann"

The fourth group composed a short passage on Sara Bartmann's whereabouts, but the article reads as if the group did not relate to the topic. They started off well by describing what had happened to her, but then they lost the plot. I assume they had very little prior knowledge about this topic, and it was not enough to enable them to write a coherent article as these lines illustrate:

6-8.1 "the Dutch traded her to a Dutch (person) From Europe exhibition her body in a museum"

15-19 "...Bartmanns humanness make it unconscionable to own her who might it future pop up and say that Egyption mummies and people to should be returned to Egypt"

~~missing girls~~

- 1 British police searching for missing Sea
- Schoolgirls, Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells,
- yesterday found two bodies but have yet to
- confirm the identities. A man walking in a
- 5 Wooded area close to the village of Mildenhall
- in Suffolk, near the girls' home village of
- Saham, made the discovery and tipped off
- police shortly after lunchtime. This man was
- taking his dog for a walk while his dog started
- 10 to pull him in the forest. His dog took him a about
- 1km in the forest and ~~the~~ what he saw gave
- him a fright of his life as he explained. The two
- girls were badly beaten. He phoned the police
- and the police and parents were ~~there~~ in 10
- 15 minutes. The police arrested the man because
- they thought he was the killer. A hour later
- the doctors that examined the bodies was
- able to ~~match~~ them up and say that it was
- the girls and the found finger prints. The police
- 20 took finger prints and were able to match
- them up and to their surprise it was
- two teachers that were at the two girls' ^{2 days}
- School. They caught the couple at about from
- ^{at about 2} Mildenhall in a hotel. The man that found the girls
- ^{was from} 25 was soon letted go. The couple decided
- was separated in the jail they questioned
- them separately for safety reasons. 5 days
- after that we finally got the story that
- we needed. Holly and Jessica always
- 30 hated the couple and so the couple
- decided they should do something about the
- girls. Jessica and Holly were walking down from
- school when one of the teachers grabbed the
- two girls and took them in the van. They took the
- 35 girls to a old warehouse just outside of Mildenhall.
- The beat the girls up with a whip then they
- burned the girls and best of all they stabbed the
- girls 6 times each. Then they dumped the girls
- in the forest and the couple ran away. So this
- 40 was a brutal murder said the chief of police but
- they will serve justice so the couple will face
- excursion on the 27/9/02

Group 5: "Couple held for murder of missing girls"

The fifth group of learners wrote the above-mentioned article. In contrast to the other newspaper articles they took the whole title into consideration. They did not only write the story of the missing girls, but they talked about the "couple, which were held for the murder". This group succeeded in making meaning of the whole title. These learners wrote down a detailed description of the events, which show that they were well informed and possessed prior knowledge of the event. Their knowledge enabled them to mention details of the story as follows:

- 5-7 “the village of Mildenhall in Suffolk, near the girls’ home village of Soham”
 10-11 “his dog took him about 1km into the forest”
 16-17 “1 hour later the doctors that examined the bodies”
 25-26 “the couple was separated in the joul they questioned them separalty”
 34-35 “they took the girls to a old warehouse”
 38 “they dumped the girls in the forest”

The second category of context related cues focuses on the writing style the learners applied in their articles. Interestingly, when describing the leading person in the article, the learners seemed to use a biographical style in a chronological story line. This was the only writing style detected in the learners’ work. They seemed to be familiar with this style of chronological writing as illustrated below.

The first group (see article group 1 above) told their story starting with “how Mark Shuttleworth grew up” until the time he actually went to space and what is still going to happen.

- 1 “Mark Shuttleworth grew up with his parents”
 20 “And is currently funding”
 29 “This may be the first African to travel to space”
 33-34 “The results of these tests have yet to be concluded”

The same kind of chronology was applied in the second, the third and fourth group’s articles. In “The history of Natalie DuToit” (see article group 2 above) it was done as follows:

- 2 “She started her cereer from a young age four years when she turned 18 she was in a terrible accident.”
 6 “She though about losing her cereer of swimming.”
 12 “She also received two gold medles from the common wealth games”

In “The many faces of Desmond Dube”:

- 1 “Desmond Dube was a street kid”
 2 “he ran away”
 4 “they fall in love and married”
 15 “Dube carried on with his program...and he was happy”

In “The story of Sarah Bartmann”:

- 1 “Sarah Bartmann was born in 1789 in the Cape Province.”

23 “and she died in 1819 in Paris.”

Interestingly, the learners in group five who wrote the article about the missing girls did not approach the topic as a biography of the two girls, but they told the story of the events as mentioned in the title “Couple held for murder of missing girls”. In the first twenty lines of the story, they wrote what had happened previously and from line 20 onwards they focused on the couple that was caught. The learners seemed to be aware of the writing style of newspaper articles. They informed us about “the missing girls”, which was “known” information (according to the media), followed by the “new” information about the couple that had been arrested (the previous day).

In general, we can state that the learners applied a familiar style, a biographic writing style, especially in the articles where the learners could relate to the protagonist(s). They seemed to find it easy to remember information, because the topic was relevant to them (as in group 5). So, they made use of their prior knowledge on two levels, in content and in style of writing, both of which seemed to enable them to make meaning and write meaningful texts.

The evidence seems to suggest that the learners who were most successful in this writing exercise had more prior knowledge about the chosen topic. Group five however, was not only successful in writing about the details of their subject, but they also had prior knowledge of the writing style i.e. knowledge about how to write a newspaper article.

I assume that the strict chronology that was applied in four of the articles was the only writing style these learners were familiar with, as in biographical stories that were available in the classroom. It did not seem that they had realised that life stories in newspapers often start with the present and then go back in time, except for group five.

We can conclude that knowing more about a certain topic or a certain writing style will give the writer a better result and a better chance of success. So, prior knowledge seems to play a major role in successful writing. This finding is very important, because it implies that reading should create opportunities for learners to use their prior knowledge to make sense of the new knowledge and vice versa. The more the learners read, the more prior knowledge they create and the better they can apply their knowledge in other situations, as the writing exercise suggests.

4.3.3.2 Lexical cues and Miscues

For the sequencing activity, I decided to use Phyllis Savoy's stories from the book "The little Wise One. African tales of the hare" (see appendix 8 for the original stories), and I had several reasons why I chose these stories. Firstly, the stories could be found in one of the books that was available in the classroom during the intervention. Secondly, the grade six teacher had selected this book to read two stories aloud also during the intervention. As a third reason, I selected this book, because the stories are build up chronologically, and the repetitive character of these stories would make it easier for the learners to make sense. The characters (e.g. hare, monkey, warthog) are recognisable African animals to which the learners could relate more easily, which is another important reason for choosing these stories.

The analysis of the lexical cues is not meant to illustrate how the learners used these cues to sequence the stories in a meaningful way, as I do not have prove of this, because the learners did not consciously record the reasons why they sequenced the paragraphs as they did. It is rather an interpretation of my understanding of the usefulness of the lexical cues available in the six stories.

The term "lexical cue" refers to the relationship between the words, sentences, paragraphs, word order, tense, number and gender. Fairclough (1989) refers to these relationships as constituting the coherence of a text. The different cues I identified in the texts were repetition (nouns, verbs, phrases), synonyms or related words and anaphora.

I would also like to clarify another term that I will use, namely "miscues". When learners are not successful in sequencing the stories, it means that the words or phrase structures used in the text might have been too difficult. Therefore the learners were unable to make meaning of the given story. However, these miscues should not be considered as failures or mistakes, but rather as a guideline on how learners tried to make meaning, but misinterpreted the story line and the available cues.

Group 1: "The waxen horns"

[paragraph 1]

The waxen horns

Long, long ago all the animals of Africa were on friendly terms with one another. They made their own laws and rules, and from time to time they chose a king to guide them. At this particular time the elephant ruled as monarch of the wilds, and his subjects willingly carried out his every wish.

[p2] One day, anxious to discuss a matter of importance and great privacy that concerned the antelopes, Elephant called a meeting of all the horned members of his kingdom. They immediately made ready to attend.

[p3] Sunguru the Hare was hornless, of course. When he realised that he was not included in the summons, he was not only upset but also greatly annoyed. He was an inquisitive creature, and the more he thought about it, the more envious and disgruntled he became.
"I shall attend the meeting!" he grumbled as he sat with his chin in his paws in deep cogitation. "I must think of a plan to deceive the antelopes into believing that I am a member of their community."

[p4] For two whole days Sunguru thought, and thought, and thought – until at last he sat up with a jerk, and a large grin replaced the frown that had puckered his face for so long.
He chuckled as he skipped towards the forest and made his way to a deserted bees' nest, which he remembered seeing in an ant-bear hole not far away. He soon located it, separated the wax from the old honeycomb, and took the wax home.

[p5] With great skill he shaped the wax into a pair of elegant, shiny horns to wear on top of his head. Then he settled down for the night with a sigh of contentment.

[p6] Early the next morning he moulded the waxen horns onto his head to fit securely between his neat little round ears. Then hop-pity-skip he went down the path to the antelopes' meeting place, smiling to himself and shaking his head from time to time to test the firmness of his new head-dress.

"An excellent imitation," he smirked. "These foolish antelopes will never suspect that my horns are not real!"

There was a sharp nip in the early morning air as Sunguru set out from home, so the wax held firm and hard. But as he neared the meeting place, the day promised to become hot.

[p7] Seeing many curious glances in his direction as he arrived, Sunguru lost no time in mingling with the crowd. He gave a sigh of relief. Thank goodness, he thought, none of the animals has recognised me. Even the elephant's vigilant eyes accepted him as one of the group. All went well for a while, and he heard many secrets that concerned the horned creatures.

[p8] But the hare had overlooked the fact that wax melts in the midday heat – or perhaps he was unaware of it – and as the sun grew hotter, the waxen horns began to soften until at last they started to melt. Sunguru felt something wet trickling down the side of his face. He brushed it away impatiently, thinking that he was perspiring. But to his horror he saw that there was molten wax on his paw.

[p9] He paled beneath his fur, and tried to find a corner in which to hide. But the antelopes had already noticed that his elegant horns were bending in the heat. They were too quick for him, and as the disguise collapsed on either side of Sunguru's head, the jostling crowd caught him and dragged him to their king, shouting, "Impostor! Spy!"

"Well," said the elephant when he saw the hare's treach-

[p10] ery, "if Sunguru wishes to wear ornaments on his head, I shall see that his wish is carried out. It will act as a reminder of his deceit for ever more!" He then ordered the horned creatures each in turn to pull the hare's ears with all their might.

[p11] This punishment was administered until Sunguru's little round ears had stretched, and stretched, and stretched to the length of the elegant waxen horns with which he had tried to deceive not only the antelopes, but his king as well. And to this very day the hare wears his long ears as a badge of his disgrace, and he is disliked and distrusted by all the horned animals around him.

Narrator: Gladia Marika

Told by the Kikuyu of Mount Kenya, this tale with variations is also found in many other countries.

Group 2: "The Lion, the Hare and the fleas"

[paragraph 1] *The lion, the hare and the fleas*

In the long, long ago, when the world was very young and animals could talk, a lion was walking along a footpath one day when he saw one of Hare's children playing in the sunshine.

[p2] Now, the lion had had nothing to eat that day and he was hungry. So although Hare's child was very small, he caught and ate it because his stomach was empty.

[p3] The hare, being nearby, saw this happen. He was very angry with the lion and decided to punish him. But because the lion was so big and fierce and strong, and the hare so very small and weak, he could not go up to the lion and say, "Lion, why did you eat my child?" Surely the lion would then eat him too! He had to plan his revenge very carefully.

[p4] Although the hare was such a little fellow, he was renowned throughout the land for his cleverness. He thought for a long time how to get the better of the lion, until at last he hit upon a plan.

[p5] Now, he thought to himself, I must pretend to know nothing of the fact that he killed my child, and make him believe that I am his friend. And he smiled at his own ingenuity.

[p6] Some days passed before he saw the lion having his mid-day rest in the shade of a tree. He sidled up to him and bowed deeply, saying, "Good day, friend Lion! I see you have chosen an excellent resting place on this very hot day. Have you eaten well?"

[p7] "Yes, Hare, I have eaten well. I caught a fat bush-pig that will satisfy my needs for several days."

[p8] When the hole was deep enough, the hare carefully put the lion's tail into it, and filled it again with the earth that he had dug out. Then he firmly stamped down the soil with the blunt end of his stick so that no matter how hard the lion pulled, he would not be able to free himself.

[p9] It was not long before the lion, soothed by the hare combing through the hair on the end of his tail, fell into a deep sleep. With a chuckle of glee the hare, using a sharp-pointed stick that he had brought with him, began to dig a hole quite close to the root of the lion's tail.

[p10] "Let me help you, friend," said the hare. "I'll hold your tail with one paw while I catch the fleas with the other."
"How good it is to have such a true friend!" smiled the lion as he settled down again to continue his nap, while the hare began to catch the fleas on the end of his tail.

[p11] He poked the lion in the ribs and called, "Get up, Lion, and tell me who it is that eats children!"

The lion woke with a start and tried to jump up, but his tail was so firmly embedded in the hole that he fell back with a roar of pain. After much struggling he managed to sit up and tried to grab the hare, but he might have saved himself the trouble. The hare was well beyond his reach, thoroughly enjoying the lion's discomfiture.

[p12] Roaring in rage, the lion realised that he was firmly trapped. He also knew that he could not expect any help from the animals around, for had he not, at some time or another, made a meal of at least one of their relations? There was his mate, of course, but as he had refused to share the tasty bush-pig with her, she was sure to take her own revenge!

[p13] "And did you sleep well last night?"

"Yes, Hare, I slept well."

"But you would sleep much better if you did not have so many fleas in the brush of your tail! I can see them running about from where I stand."

"I know, Hare," replied the lion. "The fleas are a great bother to me, because my tail will not stay still while I try to catch them. They are such small creatures, and my paws are so large."

Group 3: "The hare and his mother"

[paragraph 1] *The hare and his mother*

Kalulu the Hare was a good son. He had supported his mother throughout the lean years that followed his father's death, but he was having more and more difficulty in finding sufficient food for the two of them. So he finally decided to look for work at the farm of a man who lived nearby.

[p2] The man was pleased to employ him because, having no sons, there was no one to herd his cattle. It became the hare's work to take the beasts out to pasture each day as soon as the dew was off the grass. When the cows had been milked, Kalulu was given a calabash of milk for his breakfast, and another one when he returned in the evening. His morning ration he took to the grazing lands with him.

[p3] By the time Kalulu caught up with him, the man had reached his father-in-law's hut and was inside greeting the old man. "Bring me the bag and the honey, Hare," he called, "and shut the door so that we are not disturbed."

Kalulu lost no time in following the man's instructions. Then he put a heavy pole against the door so that it could not be opened from the inside. With his ear to the door he waited.

[p4] The hare, however, had his own reason for taking the milk to the pastures each day. When he reached a big tree along the way, he stopped and, tapping the trunk lightly, called, "Mother, Mother, come out! It is your son with your food."

Then his mother would come to the opening and embrace him. She would pour some of the milk into her own calabash before returning to her underground refuge, and was always very grateful to her son for his care.

[p5] One day the man said, "Hare, why is it that you do not drink your milk before you leave each day? Who are you feeding on my food?"

"In the early hours of the day I do not need food," Kalulu replied. "I prefer to drink it when the sun is hot, and the beasts are resting under the trees."

[p6] The man became more and more suspicious as the days passed and the hare continued to take his breakfast with him each day. So he decided to spy on him, to see if he spoke the truth.

[p7] One morning the man followed at a distance and, sure enough, as Kalulu reached the tree he saw him tap it and heard him call, "Mother, Mother, it is your son bringing you food."

[p7] The man went back to his hut, picked up a bag, slung it over his shoulder and returned to the tree. Three times he tapped the trunk and called in a small and squeaky voice, "Mother, Mother, it is your son bringing you more food."

The old hare came to the opening, and was immediately seized and put into the bag. Then the man hurried home with his catch.

[p8] The following day when Kalulu took the cattle out to graze, he tapped on the tree and called his mother as usual, but there was no reply. For three days the same thing happened and in great sorrow he concluded that a jackal must have eaten her.

[p12] Kalulu opened the bag. To his great surprise and joy, out jumped his mother. "So that is how the man repays me for all my hard work!" he exclaimed as he embraced her. "I shall punish him for this." Filling the bag with angry bees, he tied it up again and hastened after the man.

[p9] On the fourth day, the man said, "Hare, carry this bag for me. I have a present to take to my father-in-law." And he handed the bag to the hare.

[p10] They had travelled some distance along the road to the father-in-law's home when a honey-bird called from a tree nearby, and the man said, "Hare, go with that bird and bring me some honey; then follow after me."

[p11] The bird led the hare to a hollow tree, and the contented hum of the bees inside showed that there was a great deal of honey. So the hare took the axe from his belt, and put down his bag next to a bush before he began to chop. It did not take him long to reach the nest, and after a good feed of the delicious honey he broke off a big piece of comb for the man and turned to pick up the bag.

But something was struggling inside the bag and a voice called out, "Oh, untie me! Untie me!"

[p14] Presently there were shouts and screams from inside as the bees, angry at their rough handling, swarmed out when the bag was untied. "Open the door! Open the door! Oh, the bees! Hurry, they are killing us!" the man and his father-in-law and their family shouted.

The screams continued, but the hare did not wait to see the outcome. He hurried back to find his mother and took her to live with him very far away from the man who had been his master.

It often occurs in African folktales that animals, particularly the hare, are hired by humans to work for them, conversing with their masters. In this story bees are again used to punish cruelty or to take revenge. It is a favourite ruse, found in different forms in many tales.

Group 4: "The Hare, the Hippopotamus and the Fire"

The hare, the hippopotamus and the fire

[paragraph 1]

The hare and the hippopotamus were great friends. They walked together in the veld and visited each other in their homes. The hippopotamus was very proud of his hut on the edge of the forest, and every day he gathered soft dry grass to add to the comfort of his very large bed, for he was a very large creature.

[p9] "Dear friend," said the fire, "to do so would give me pleasure, but it would cause you nothing but distress. All creatures fear me when I leave my home, and you would fear me too."

[p11] As the hippopotamus refused to listen to his protestations, the fire eventually said, "Very well, tomorrow at midday I shall visit you."

The hippopotamus was delighted.

The following day he was preparing for his guest's arrival when he heard a crackling noise outside. He looked out of

[p12] the doorway of his hut to see a big black cloud approaching, and many birds and animals running towards him in panic. "My friend is on his way!" thought the hippopotamus joyfully. But his joy turned to fear as the fire entered his hut with a roar and a hiss. Then he felt searing flames envelop him as the tinder-dry grass that was his bed caught alight. He raced from the hut like a ball of fire, and into the river he plunged to cool his burning skin. Not a hair was left on his big hare body - and so it has remained ever since.

[p6] The hippopotamus was silent for a while as doubts began to creep into his mind. Then he said, "Well, maybe you are right, friend Hare, for many times have I accepted hospitality from Fire. Yet never once has he given me the opportunity of returning it in my own home. I shall speak to him about it."

[p3] The hare was very angry at such apparent heartlessness. For a long while he nursed his anger, during which time he planned to punish his friend for his carelessness.

Some time later he again visited the hippopotamus. The hippo was delighted to see him, and soon their conversation was running smoothly as of old.

[p10] "But, good Fire, that would be impossible, considering our long-standing friendship. I have complete trust in you. Please visit my home. If you fail to do so, I shall know that there has been but little truth in your professed friendship for me."

[p4] "My friend," said the hare, following a lull in the conversation, "why is it that Fire, although professing great friendship towards you, does not return the many visits you have paid him? Surely it is right that you should return his past hospitality! Or is it that his friendship is not as great as he would have you believe?"

[p5] "No, Hare," replied the hippo, "his friendship is indeed a true one. We always find great enjoyment in each other's company."

"Then, friend Hippo, to test his fondness for you, let him know that you are deeply hurt at his neglect."

[p7] Having had the seeds of doubt so successfully sown in his mind, the hippopotamus lost no time in calling on Fire. The hare did not accompany him, complaining of toothache.

"Good day to you, Fire," said the hippopotamus. "Do I find you well?"

[p2] He was also quite vain, for he had a beautiful coat of hair which kept him warm throughout the winter months.

Then it happened that one day, while on a walk together, the hippopotamus - who was as clumsy as he was large - pushed the hare against a tree, hurting him badly. Not realising what he had done, the hippopotamus walked on, taking no notice of the hare's cries of pain.

[p13] The hippopotamus never went back to his home on the edge of the forest, but has lived in rivers and lakes from that day on, too afraid of meeting Fire again. And he never ventures out of the water in daytime, leaving it only at night to eat the grass at the water's edge.

This tale of revenge is peculiar to the Tongas of Southern Zanzibar.

[p8] "Good day to you," replied the fire, "it is a long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you. Have you been ill, that you have not visited me for so long?"

"Not ill, Fire," replied the hippopotamus, "but I have been greatly grieved that you have never returned my friendship by visiting me."

Group 5: "The hare and the warthog"

[paragraph 1] *The hare and the warthog*

The hare was full of happiness one morning as the sun rose over the hills, and he tripped along the path to gather pumpkins from his lands nearby. Were not his children the most beautiful in the land? And certainly he had reason to be proud of his flocks of sheep and goats. His crops, too, were all that could be desired. Yes, life was indeed good.

[p2] He was so preoccupied thinking about his possessions that he failed to watch the path, and suddenly he was wrenched up into the air. There he hung by a leg from a short rope attached to a long sapling, which had been

driven into the ground – he had put his foot into a trap that had been cunningly hidden in the path. [p3]

"Oh, oh, oh!" he shrieked. "Help! Please, dear friends, come and cut me down. Oh, help, help!"

[p8] The warthog continued to laugh at the hare's misfortune, so the hare said, "Please, good friend, if you are not willing to help me, then at least call my friends to cut me down."

However, instead of calling the hare's friends, the warthog called his family, who joined in making fun of the unfortunate hare. Realising that he could expect no help from the hard-hearted warthog family, the hare said no more.

[p6] It was late in the afternoon when he saw a warthog trotting along the path towards him, tail in the air and full of importance. Here was help at last, thought the hare, and he was about to call out when the warthog saw him.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the heartless creature. "Is it not the Wise One I see hanging by his leg in such an undignified manner? Oh, this is too funny! Ho, ho, ho!"

[p13] The crafty hare knew of a game-pit next to a reed fence at the edge of a mealie patch which belonged to a nearby village, and this was where he led the chase.

When he came to the trap, he skipped over it, knowing that his light weight would not break the twigs that covered the deep hole underneath.

[p12] This made the warthog very angry. He was a bully and not fond of criticism, but in his heart he knew that he had behaved badly. He had no intention of admitting this, however, so he chased the hare, hoping to kill him with his sharp tusks. The wily hare dodged from side to side as he ran, and because the warthog was big and clumsy he fell further and further behind – but still he continued the chase.

[p9] Presently the warthog's curiosity got the better of him. He had heard of these traps but had never seen one, so he decided to find out how they worked. "Hare," he said, "tell me, how is it that you hang there, upside down? I cannot understand how the pole got you there." And he went up to the pole to examine it.

[p4] It was unfortunate for the hare that not a single friend was within earshot, nor did any pass that way throughout the day. But it was fortunate indeed that the man who had set the trap happened to be spending the day at a nearby village, where a beer party was taking place, and had forgotten all about the snare.

[p14] The warthog, however, being big and heavy, broke the twigs when he trod on them. He fell into the pit and onto a spike that had been set upright at the bottom. It pierced his stomach, causing him such an injury and so much pain that he died before sunset.

[p11] The hare lost no time in untying the rope that held him. Once free, he began to curse the warthog, calling him every bad name he could think of because he had refused to help a friend in need, as is the law of the wild.

[p5] The hours passed slowly, and the hare wept bitterly as he thought of his dear wife, his children, and his beautiful flocks of sheep and goats, which he would never see again.

[p7] The hare suppressed his anger at the warthog's laughter and unkind words and said, "Dear friend Warthog, please release me. When the owner of this trap finds me, he will kill me because of all the mealies I have taken from his garden."

[p10] "This would make an excellent rubbing post," he continued, and he proceeded to rub the itchy spot on his back against the pole. But the warthog was big and heavy, and the pole was light and bendy, so it soon fell down.

[p15] The hare ran on, laughing to himself. And the village people enjoyed a feast of roast warthog on the following day.

As can be seen from this folktale, animals were often regarded as having human attributes, building human habitations, built and villages. Keeping and tending herds of cattle and goats, and talking as human beings do.

Group 6: "The hyena, the goat, the leopard and the hare"

[paragraph 1]

The hyena, the goat, the leopard and the hare

The hyena's home was near a river, and he owned a little canoe of which he was exceedingly proud. Most hyenas are very greedy and this one was no exception. He also happened to be very hungry, for he had not eaten for several days. So early in the morning he climbed into his canoe and paddled across the river to see what he could find on the other side. Like the rest of his family, he was a thief and seldom made his living by honest means.

[p5] But once there his troubles began. The canoe was so small that he could carry only two of his new acquisitions at a time. How could he get all his booty over safely?

[p3] "I am indeed fortunate," he said, pushing open the door of a hut. Inside he found a large basket of meal, and rubbed his paws together with joy. "This will provide many meals for me," he chuckled as he dragged it outside.

[p2] He dragged the canoe into the reeds next to the river and tied it securely. Then he went in search of something to eat. Before long he came to a little footpath that led towards a forest. After following it for some time, he came to a village. He approached it stealthily, because he was a coward as well as a thief. To his joy he found it deserted, the occupants being away at a beer drinking party.

[p4] He then went to the next hut, where he broke down the door and found a goat tethered to the centre pole. This he took, and tied it to the basket of meal before exploring the contents of the third hut. In it he found a leopard, also tied up, and he added it to the goat and the basket of meal. He picked up the basket and, dragging the goat and the leopard after him, hastened back to the place where he had left his canoe.

[p9] "No," answered Kalulu, "it was not a thief who took your meal. I took it as payment for the excellent advice I gave you just now. Surely you must admit that this is only just and fair!"

And with a low bow he continued on his way, leaving the hyena to ponder on the ways of justice.

[p8] Kalulu never failed to turn the problems of others to his own advantage, so after a moment's thought he said, "Why, Hyena my friend, that is easy. First you must take over the goat and the leopard. But bring back the leopard with you when you return for the meal. In that way both the goat and the meal will be safe."

[p9] "What a true friend you are, Kalulu," said the hyena gratefully, and at once followed the hare's advice. He took the goat and the leopard over on the first trip, and brought back the leopard on his return to fetch the meal.

But while he was away, Kalulu filled a bag that he carried over his shoulder with meal from the hyena's basket. He was strolling away when the hyena returned and exclaimed, "Oh, Kalulu, a thief has stolen half my meal!"

[p7] He was sitting woefully on the river bank, wondering what to do, when Kalulu the Hare sauntered by.

"Good day to you, my friend," the hare said. "What is troubling you, that you look so miserable?"

"Oh, Kalulu," replied the hyena, "I am greatly puzzled as to how to get my three purchases over the river, for my canoe is too small to take everything over at the same time. If I take the goat and the leopard first, surely the leopard will eat the goat while I return for the meal! And if I take the goat and the meal over together, the goat will eat the meal while I return for the leopard. Kalulu, I am greatly perplexed!"

The first two stories had a recognisable opening phrase: "long, long ago..." and "in the long, long ago, when the world was very young...". Both groups selected these paragraphs as the first paragraphs¹⁴. These phrases are easily recognisable, because similar constructions are often used in fairytales.

I identified three main categories of lexical cues: repetition, related words (e.g. synonyms) and anaphora, that the learners might find useful to sequence the stories in a meaningful order.

Throughout all the chosen stories, the repetitive character of nouns, verbs and phrases was fore-grounded. In the first story, keywords were repeated as following examples suggest: "the elephant" [p1] and "Elephant" [p2], "Sunguru" [p3 and p4], "the wax" [p4 and p5].

¹⁴ [p1], [p2],... refers to the paragraphs of the original stories as we can find them in appendix 8.

In story two, there are meaningful interconnections between the following nouns, “Hare’s children” [p1] and “Hare’s child” [p2], “lion” [p1 and p2] and “friend” [p5 and p6]. Story three connects following nouns, phrases and verbs: “man” [p1 and p2], “tree” and “food” [p6 and p7] and “father-in-law” [p9 and p10], “Have you eaten well?” [p6] and “Yes, Hare, I have eaten well?” [p7], “a roar of pain” [p12] and “roaring” [p13], “Mother, Mother, it is your son bringing you food” [p6] and “Mother, Mother, it is your son bringing you more food” [p7], “call” [p6] and “called” [p7]. Further in story 4 and 5 there are examples such as “friendship” [p4 and p5] (story 4) and “path” [p2 and p3] (story 5).

In some cases, the second lexical cues are identifiable, namely related words (i.e. synonyms, contrast) which were used to link the paragraphs of the stories. The following are illustrative of these cues as in story 1, “monarch” [p1] and “kingdom” [p2], “a meeting” [p2] and “summons” [p3], “horned members” [p2] and “hornless” [p3], “the waxen horns” [p8] and “his elegant horns” [p9], “to pull the hare’s ears” [p10] and “ears had stretched” [p11], “pull the hare’s ears with all their might” [p10] and “this punishment” [p11].

Story 3 contains similar connections as in following examples, “to look for work” [p1] and “to employ him” [p2], “to spy on him” [p5] and “followed at a distance” [p6]. In the stories of group 4 and 5 there are also links between consecutive paragraphs through the following related words “his guest” [p11] and “my friend” [p12] (group 4) and “hung by a leg from a short rope” [p2] and “a trap” [p3] (group 5).

The third lexical cues found in the stories are anaphora. This refers to pronouns (i.e. he, she, this) that refer back to the previous sentence where the actual noun was used. Examples from story 1 made following links: “Sunguru” [p4] and “he” [p5], “he” [p7] and “the hare” [p8]. In story 2 the same connection is made between “the hare” [p4] and “he” [p5] and in story 3 between “the man” and “Hare” [p9] referring to “They” [p10]. And finally in group 5 there was a link between “the Hare” [p1] and “He” [p2]. As soon as the name of the protagonist of the story is settled in the first paragraphs, the author starts to refer to “he”, in these stories “the hare”.

Anaphoric pronouns can often cause confusion. The use of “he” and “they” can be ambiguous as illustrated in story 6: “the hyena” [p1] is only mentioned there and in the other paragraphs “the hyena” is referred to as “he”, which makes it very

difficult for the learners to follow. Another protagonist in the same story “Kalulu” [p8 and p10] might also have confused the learners, because “Kalulu” could have been referred to “he” as well.

In summary, the learners’ completed work revealed important factors in their meaning making process. It would seem that during the reading process successful meaning making happened by applying prior knowledge. As a result, the more information the learners had gathered prior to the activity, the more successful they seemed in the writing activity. Prior knowledge seemed to apply to the content as well as to the writing style. The learners used their prior knowledge to detect the appropriate writing style and to recognise certain sentence structures.

The analysis of the sequencing activity illustrated how learners might have used lexical cues as aid to sequence the stories in a meaningful order. I assume that often the repetitive character of the story helped them to make sense. Nouns are easily recognisable and understandable, whereas the conjunctions, prepositions (which I did not mention in the analysis) are abstract words and are on a deeper level of language proficiency. The way in which the first two groups sequenced the stories showed us that they understood the content of these stories. The other groups were less successful, but it does not mean that they failed. It rather refers to level of their understanding of this specific text and they might have been more successful with another text. They tried to make meaning of the paragraphs, but misunderstood the cues available in their stories.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research was to find out how conditions could be enhanced in a multilingual classroom. For this study, only two reading conditions, namely, immersion and engagement, were fore-grounded from a list of eight suggested by Cambourne (see p.18 in this study) as key indicators to enabling learners to become independent readers. While I understood that the eight conditions work as interrelated entities and cannot be viewed as separate, the selected ones seemed necessary prerequisites upon which to build the remaining six conditions. Secondly, because of time constraints (the length of time that could be spent on the intervention), it was necessary to find a way to contain and delimit the focus of the study, hence the choice of foregrounding only two conditions. Notwithstanding, what became clear as the research progressed, was the interconnectedness of these conditions as well as the dialectic relationship between reading and writing.

As a way of analysing the results, I integrate and critique the literature (Chapter 2) and the emerging themes from my fieldwork (Chapter 4), which are further categorised in order to demonstrate the enhanced reading conditions. This analysis is presented at three levels, namely an examination of the material, cognitive and social perceived benefits during the intervention. In examining the perceived benefits attention is paid to how these conditions operate in multilingual contexts.

5.1 The material level

5.1.1 *A conducive environment for independent reading*

One of the prerequisites for developing independent readers according to Smith (1985), Flanagan (1995) and Weaver (1994), is ensuring that the environment is conducive to making children *want* to read. This, they suggest, includes creating a literacy rich environment (thereby immersing learners) and having a variety of texts. Key within this environment is the need to create opportunities for learners to read independently (silently), with others and sometimes for others. However, these theorists agree that making meaning is the fundamental purpose of reading and hence, learners need much opportunity to read silently, a process they suggest, facilitates making meaning rather than a concentration on “getting it right”.

In the two models of reading discussed in the literature review, the one focusing on “getting it right” as its primary aim, concentrated on decontextualised skill development within a hierarchical structure where learners have to demonstrate their

proficiency by reading aloud. However, the model that has meaning making as the cornerstone for reading development, pays attention to providing as many opportunities for learners to read silently, with more capable others and only sometimes, reading aloud. The premise (as already discussed on pages 13, 16, 24 of the literature review) upon which the latter model is built, rests on the belief that in reading silently, learners concentrate on obtaining meaning from the text and can use a variety of cues (semantic, syntactic, etc.) to do so.

In the study a conducive reading environment was created in two ways. Firstly, the classroom itself was transformed into a literacy rich and reading-friendly environment. In this regard posters and other material were put up on the wall and books were made available. Secondly, the environment was also made conducive by creating a positive attitude towards reading whereby learners were allowed to make choices regarding when, what and how they read, e.g. silently, individually, in pairs or with a group.

In the results, it was evident that learners were excited about the change in the physical environment and as a consequence, reacted enthusiastically to the new look of their classroom. I noted that as soon as they saw the variety of books, they voluntarily started to read, with little or no directive from myself as researcher or from the teacher. For the duration of the intervention, the same thing would happen each morning, that is, the learners would run to the bookshelf, select a book and begin reading before their teacher came into the classroom, something that I did not experience prior to the intervention. For the most part, during these non-timetabled sessions, learners would read silently.

In creating a conducive reading environment, my study highlights some key considerations that worked to enhance reading development and serve towards enabling learners to become more independent. The first critical factor relates to the opportunity learners had to make free *choices*. During the intervention they selected whatever, whenever and however they wanted to read. On one level, being able to exercise choice seemed to change learners' perceptions of reading. During the initial phase what was most apparent was that reading seemed to be associated with either punishment or as something one did only after real work (schoolwork or homework) had been completed. However, during the intervention, being able to choose what, when and how to read seemed to be associated with reading for enjoyment, reading

seemed to be associated with enjoyment, a necessary condition for developing independent readers.

In creating opportunities for learners to exercise choice, the second factor was evident, that is, they were beginning to take responsibility in managing their own reading development. This was evident in the voluntary nature of engagement, the time learners spent reading, the number of books they read in a short space of time and the general enthusiasm around books.

The third interrelated factor relates to the expanded opportunities learners had to read silently. In this regard, reading silently meant that learners could concentrate on making meaning rather than getting it right. They could make mistakes without fear of correction or ridicule but also have opportunities to self-correct. In self-correcting learners could rely on various strategies that included using prior knowledge and experience, prediction, semantic and syntactic cues as well as miscues, features that Smith (1985) suggests as characteristic in what independent readers do.

Creating a conducive environment thus did serve to enhance reading development. What seemed more important though was what learners could do within this context, that is, exercise choice and take responsibility for their own reading development.

5.1.2 Variety, interest and relevance of books

Another key condition in developing independent readers, as Smith (1985) and Cambourne (1988) state, is the need to provide a variety of texts. Variety means ensuring that learners are immersed in and exposed to different texts and genres as well as different levels (in terms of difficulty) of reading material.

The results of the initial phase revealed that learners had little choice in what they could read. Most of the available books in the classroom were either basal readers, magazines used for purposes other than reading and English textbooks that were only used to complete decontextualised exercises. To fulfil this condition, during the intervention, many more books were available. What the results indicate however is that in fulfilling this condition, two key issues need consideration, namely, learners' interests and relevance.

In completing a survey during the initial phase, I ascertained what learners were interested in, and by so doing I could select and provide books I perceived they

would want to read. As a result, what became evident in the intervention period was that learners engaged because they were interested in the topics. They also seemed to read because the material was contextually relevant to their everyday experiences. For example, they read more books about soccer, and in completing the tasks could rely on their prior knowledge and experience because the topics were current, interesting and relevant to their life-worlds.

What these results point towards, is the importance of considering variety in the context of learner interest and relevance. Critically, immersion and variety of texts are insufficient conditions if not provided within the broader framework of learner interest and relevance on the one hand and learner choice on the other. This seems especially true in multilingual environments (as my study showed) where learners' main language is not the medium of instruction. Providing learners with opportunity to choose the level at which they want to read, as well as texts that are somewhat familiar seems a necessary condition for enhancing reading development and facilitating independent reading, as aspect that is expanded upon in the next section.

5.2 The cognitive level

5.2.1 Using reading strategies: Considering form and content

As a vehicle for enhancing reading development, it was evident that some level of success lay in creating a conducive environment in which learner interest and relevance were considered. However, creating material opportunities seemed to be only the first step in the process of enhancing reading development and as such, insufficient in ensuring more sustainable changes in learners reading engagement.

In ensuring more sustainable reading practices, Weaver (1994), Cambourne (1988) and Smith (1985) suggest that a focus on reading strategies rather than reading skills is key. This means that, in engaging in the act of reading, learners should focus on using reading strategies that include, amongst others, the use of prior knowledge and experience, prediction and sequencing.

In the initial phase of the study, I observed the teacher's reading approach as one that focuses on and includes allowing only the more fluent learners to read aloud and on isolated skill training (vocabulary, grammar). Little attention seemed to be paid to engaging learners in using reading strategies within a broader meaning-making framework. In fact, the ability to read aloud and show perfection in this

activity was perceived as an end in itself and not an activity that had meaning as a core purpose.

Therefore, in addition to creating a conducive environment, during the intervention, I developed reading tasks that necessitated learners using the reading strategies of prediction and sequencing. These strategies, as Smith (1985) suggests, compel learners to read for meaning in order to be successful in completing the tasks. In other words, learners would not be able to engage meaningfully in either task if they were unable to “make meaning”.

Using reading strategies is commendable as a way of engaging learners in meaning making, but what became apparent in the results was that these tasks had to comply with two critical features. The first relates to the level of difficulty and perceived challenge and the second includes the extent of familiarity of the material. Critical, too, was considering these two features as integrally linked.

Having considered the two features above, the tasks were planned. Firstly, taking into account Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of social interaction. In this regard, tasks are developed in a way that ensures learner engagement in the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). In practice, this means developing tasks that are not too difficult (so that learners do not become frustrated) or not too easy (so that learners lose interest) even when the form (structure) of the task is unfamiliar. Secondly, I ensured that the selected topics were relatively familiar thus ensuring a strong possibility that learners would use their prior knowledge and experience in completing the tasks.

At no point in the initial phase were learners engaged in either sequencing or prediction exercises. This meant that the structure (form) of the two tasks given in the intervention phase was novel. The results indicate that learners seemed to be unfazed by the novelty of the task-form because the content was sufficiently familiar and recognisable. In fact, they seemed to recognise their capacity to succeed because they “knew” the material and could immediately engage in trying to make meaning even when the form of the task was challenging. What led to learner success, it would seem, was ensuring that the content was familiar even when the form was new.

Therefore in using reading strategies as a way of enhancing reading development, attention needs to be paid to the nature and content of tasks. It seems inadequate to only consider “challenging” as meaning “level” of difficulty. Challenging in this study meant paying attention to the interrelatedness of content and

form and how these work to engage learners in meaning-making activities. In this instance it meant maintaining familiarity of content and changing the form of the task. The upshot and consequences for enhancing reading development, particularly in multilingual contexts, is that changes to both content and form may frustrate learners and move them beyond their zone of proximal development.

5.2.2 *Interrelationship between reading and writing*

Language development processes include providing opportunity for learners to listen, speak, read and write (Smith, 1985). He suggests that the more learners read the better they may become at writing and vice versa.

The interconnectedness of these two processes was evident in the intervention phase of this study. It seemed that the more the learners already knew (by implication, by hearing or by reading) about a certain topic, the better they were able to write. Conversely, while writing, learners were in a position to reread their drafts, thus giving them opportunity to refine their stories and ensure that these were coherent and meaningful.

5.3 **The social level**

The material conditions and the challenging activities could not have been successful in enhancing the reading conditions, if these had not been not organised within a supportive organisational structure. This organisational structure, particularly within a multilingual environment, seemed an important consideration for two reasons. Firstly, learners received instruction in a language that was not their first language and secondly they were expected to learn the “new” language as a subject. Within this organisational structure therefore, learners had to feel comfortable to take risks and make mistakes without fear of disapproval or ridicule.

While theorists like Cambourne (1988) and Smith (1985) focus their attention to reading development in first language environments, the principles they postulate seem feasible when considered within a supportive context, as the study indicates.

Two main aspects emerged from my study regarding the creation of a supportive and encouraging environment. During the intervention, when learners were free to read, they displayed a social behaviour, which was not observable prior to the intervention. Firstly, learners seemed to support each other through paired and group-work during reading and task activities. They helped each other, they read

together in groups of two or more but also gave each other the space to read alone, silently.

The second aspect of the supportive environment was the opportunity learners had to ask for help. At any time and for whatever reason, they were free to seek assistance from peers, the teacher or myself, as participant observer. This opportunity to ask for help created an “enhanced” relationship between teacher and learner where channels of communication were beginning to open up and become freer than before. It also meant that there was an emerging healthy reliance on peers as helpers and enhancers within the reading process.

My study therefore showed that, immersing the learners in a text-rich environment and engaging them in challenging tasks could not take place without a change in the organisational structure of the classroom.

5.4 Conclusion

This study was limited in scope and time but interesting results were obtained regarding enhancing the reading conditions in a multilingual environment.

In considering immersion and variety as key features towards enhancing reading development, first and importantly, was the need to contextualise these features within the broader framework of learner interest and relevance. Fundamental too was a consideration of the extent to which learners could exercise choice and engage in risk-taking behaviour. Risk-taking, as already discussed, means taking opportunity to engage in unfamiliar tasks, in reading books beyond current reading levels and reading with and for peers.

With regard to tasks, the results indicate that familiarity of content even when the form is novel, ensures and facilitates meaning-making behaviour. Maintaining a fine balance between changing either content or form therefore remains a critical consideration in the process of enhancing reading development.

Finally, these conditions can only be successful if they take place in a supportive structure, where learners can work together and where they feel at ease to ask for help from the teacher or from other learners.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this closing chapter I would like to take the opportunity to display the main findings of my research, as stated in chapter five, through recommendations for teachers and reading facilitators and for further reading research in the South African context.

Finally, I briefly explain my own learning process of making meaning while reading and writing during this research.

6.1 Recommendations for teachers and reading facilitators

- Teachers are invited to creating a literacy-rich environment where learners have the opportunity to be fully immersed in reading. The teachers need to understand that the availability of books is not sufficient. Learners will only read when there is a variety of books, whereby these books are interesting and relevant. Therefore, learners' interests need to be identified.

Often financial constraints are given as a reason why there are few interesting books available in the classroom. However, there are possibilities of getting books through organisations in South Africa which can help providing local books, for example, BIBLIONE¹⁵ and READ¹⁶.

Learners can even make their own storybooks. They can tell stories to each other or people from the community can come to the school to tell stories, for example about the history of the community. These stories can be recorded and transcribed into a self-made storybook. Afterwards the taped stories can be listened to and the transcribed texts can be read, by both learners and teachers.

- In order to encourage learners to read for meaning, the teacher needs to create challenging tasks. In anyone task the interconnectedness of reading and writing can be taught by giving learners a writing task based on reading strategies. These tasks should be based on familiar material in order for

¹⁵ BIBLIONE S.A. are based in 4, Central Square, Pinelands in Cape Town. They can be contacted on +27 (0)21 5310447 or by e-mail, bibsa@iafrica.com. Their aim is to provide new books in mother tongue languages to under-resourced organisations, mostly to organisations in poverty stricken communities.

¹⁶ READ is based in Johannesburg and can be contacted on +27 (0)11 4963322 and per e-mail on info@read.co.za

learners to use their prior knowledge, but challenging enough to engage learners in meaningful making meaning.

- Immersion and engagement should be organised in a supportive and encouraging environment. This environment should work as a cooperative enterprise, where learners and teachers are learning with and from each other without an atmosphere of competition. Learners should be able to ask questions and therefore the teacher needs to be available at any time, so that learners know that they are supported.

6.2 Recommendations for further reading research in South Africa

In the literature I found little evidence of recent research on reading conducted in the Intermediate Phase, especially in South Africa. It seemed that this kind of research is not often considered, because researchers and also teachers take it for granted that learners in higher grades are able to read. Researchers' concerns regarding "comprehension" of texts only appear later on in higher grades, because the higher the grade, the more there is to read and the less help the learners receive if they have problems.

- I would suggest that more qualitative in-depth research should be done in multilingual schools to be able to make generalisations on the current reading development of learners in South Africa.
- More emphasis should be on researching different language contexts, for example how reading is taught in multilingual environments and if there is a difference between teaching reading in a first and second language environment.
- A third suggestion I would like to make is about reading assessment. Tests such as cloze procedure that I used in my research are not necessarily meant to grade learners or place them in categories of "bad readers" or "slow readers". Instead of using these assessment methods in that negative way, they could be used as a vehicle for reading enhancement. I struggled to find relevant assessment material. It is necessary that relevant testing material should be developed for a South African context. For example, the testing material could be made available in the different South African languages. This would

make it easier to detect learners who struggle and need extra attention through individual qualitative evaluation and assessment.

- Regarding the use of reading strategies, I would like to make a fourth recommendation. The general aim of reading is to reach an “independent” reading level. Reading strategies should be taught to the learners in a meaningful context to teach them how to make meaning rather than focusing on isolated decoding skills. Reading strategies that are taught should be helpful tools for learners, especially for second language learners such as the grade six learners, because the emphasis should be on making meaning and not on getting it right or pronouncing it right.
- I would like to suggest that reading strategies should be taught consciously in different subjects across the curriculum, integrating them in the teaching of different subjects. The subjects could explicitly teach strategies on particular context related genres. In addition, it would also be advisable to designate a period of time for unstructured reading for all learners to read texts of their choice silently.

These recommendations should not only happen in the Foundation phase, where learners are learning to read, but should take effect throughout all grades as reading is a dynamic and continuous process.

6.3 Postscript

These last paragraphs of my thesis are dedicated to my own development of “making meaning” throughout my thesis. It is meant as self-reflection and reveals my own process of reading development. At the same time it proves again that reading and writing, in my case, are intertwined.

Some people might react with surprise if I admit that I am still learning how to read, because they assume that I learned that in primary school and that’s it! According to my own experiences, especially during this research, I understand clearly that reading is not a linear movement, but rather circular.

So, my research was not only meant to assist 42 learners in a grade six classroom to enhance their reading environment, but I was part (and maybe even in the centre) of the learning process. This process started right at the beginning of my research when I read books about reading and had to make meaning of those texts. It

was often difficult as those books contained specific terms about reading and I struggled because English is not my first language. Therefore I had to try to grasp some meaning from the whole text. This focus on making meaning has proven to be successful in my own development. It seemed the more I read (particularly works by Vygotsky and Krashen), the easier it became to write my literature review.

After my fieldwork in which it was the learners' opportunity to make meaning of the available reading material and activities, I started the writing process. Again it proved to be a real "meaning making process" in which a dynamic relationship between the written text and myself as writer was established. At the same time other people were involved as they tried to make meaning of my writing and often I had to re-write, because my text was too unpredictable because my audience had not enough prior knowledge, or because there was no(n)sense in some of it. Throughout my research, it was proven that there is a strong interrelationship between reading and writing, as shown in my analysis of the prediction activity, where it was clear that the reliance on prior knowledge was very important.

When I look back at the start of my research I had no idea that I would learn so much about reading and writing, the continuous process of learning, the dynamic processes of meaning making between myself and other people while reading, writing, listening and speaking.

As a "prophet" of the importance of independent reading and making meaning, I hope that the people who read my thesis will be able to "make meaning", "take meaning", but also "bring meaning" to this work as the dynamic process of reading continues.

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READING QUESTIONNAIRE

Date _____ Name _____

(Mark your answers with an X, example. [x]).

What is your Home language?

- ☐ English
- ☐ Xhosa
- ☐ Afrikaans
- ☐ _____

GENERAL

- 1. Do you like reading?
☐ Yes ☐ No

- 2. How many books did you already read this year (2002)?
☐ 0-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ More than 15

- 3. How much time do you spend on reading every day?
☐ 0-5 minutes
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16-20
☐ More than 20 minutes

- 4. I read books at....

	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely
School			
Library			
Home			

5. What kind of books do you like to read?

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely
Comic books				
Sports magazines				
Newspaper				
Short stories				
Long stories				

6. What kind of stories, sports and comics do you prefer to read?

Stories		Sports		Comics		General	
Drama		Soccer		Political		Horoscopes	
Action		Rugby		Action		Dear Dolly	
Fiction		Cricket		Humour		Art and craft	
Biographies		Swimming		Drama		Fashion	
Non-fiction		Tennis				Cooking	
Poetry		Golf				Science	
Plays		Athletics				Politics	
History		Netball					
		Basketball					
		Cycling					
		Karate					

7. In what language do you read mostly?

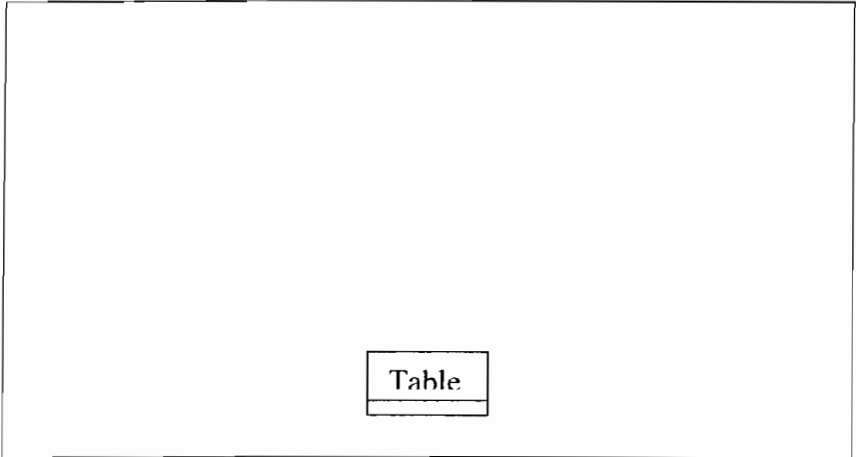
- ☐ Afrikaans
- ☐ English
- ☐ Xhosa
- ☐ _____

8. In which language do you prefer to read?

- ☐ Afrikaans
- ☐ English
- ☐ Xhosa
- ☐ _____

SCHOOL

9. Where is your favourite spot to read in the classroom?
(This square represents your classroom. If you like you can draw your favourite spot.)



10. Can you remember the titles of the books you read in the classroom?
11. Does the teacher read stories in the classroom?
☐ Yes ☐ No
12. Do you enjoy it when the teacher reads those stories?
☐ Yes ☐ No
13. Do you have a special time of the day to read in the classroom?
☐ Morning ☐ Noon ☐ Afternoon
14. Does your teacher ask you to read aloud in the classroom?
☐ Yes ☐ No
15. Do you like reading aloud?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Why or Why not?
16. Do you read silently in the classroom?
☐ Yes ☐ No
17. Do you like reading silently?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Does your teacher allow you to take books at home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If (Yes) How often?

19. Does your teacher give you reading homework?

☐ Yes ☐ No

20. If you had the choice in the classroom what books would you like to read?

HOME

21. Do you read at home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

22. Do you have a special time of the day to read at home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what is that special time?

23. Is there someone at home who reads to you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, who reads to you?

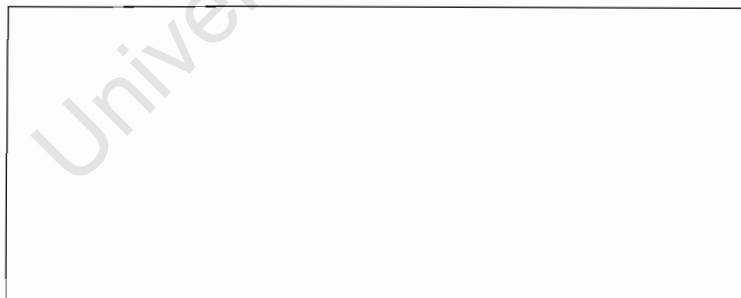
☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Sister ☐ Brother

☐ Aunt ☐ Uncle ☐ Grandmother ☐ Grandfather

☐ Someone else

24. Do you have a favourite spot at home to read?

(You can make a drawing of your favourite spot)



FAVOURITE BOOKS

25. How do you choose a book?

☐ I look at the cover (if it is nice, I take the book)

☐ I read the summary at the back of the book

☐ I browse through the book to see if I like it

☐ I take a book that a friend read and he/she said it was nice

☐ I take a book that my teacher advised me to read

☐ _____

26. Give as many titles of books (that you remember) that you read.

27. What is the title of your favourite book ever?

28. Tell me in a few sentences the story of that book?

29. Explain why you like that particular book?

Cloze-procedure text 1

Joffrey Alexis liked bicycles a lot more than (1. he) liked cars. He thought mountains and forests were (2. much) better places to be than towns and (3. cities). And he liked dogs more than he like (4. people).

It wasn't that he didn't like people at (5. all). He liked his mom, he thought his dad (6. was) very funny, sometimes he even liked his sister (7. and) he was very fond of his gran, although (8. all) that she ever did was knit and all (9. she) ever said was, "Take care!". But Joffrey Alexis (10. liked) his dogs. Their names were Maggy, Bella and (11. Disa). He loved his mountain bike, and he loved (12. the) hills, mountains and the forests that surrounded the (13. village) in which he lived. After school he jumped (14. on) his bike and with his dogs trotting a (15. few) paces behind, he would head for the places (16. where) he loved to be. Far away from people (17. and) houses Joffrey Alexis breathed deeply and sang loudly. (18. He) was never afraid and never alone. Birds and (19. flowers) were around him and striped field mice scurried (20. across) the path. Tortoises lifted their head to look (21. at) him when he passed. Sometimes mongooses dashed away (22. and) hid...

All of these and the big blue (23. sky) were company enough for Joffrey Alexis. Once or (24. twice) Joffrey Alexis had taken school friends with him (25. to) the mountain. But they talked too much and (26. did) not see what was going on in the (27. wild) places, so he stopped asking them along. His (28. mother) didn't mind if he went to the mountain (29. alone) as long as he told her where he (30. was) going. "And don't do anything silly," she always (31. said). His father said it was better to be (32. a) little bit silly at times. His sister hardly (33. every) said anything to him because she was a (34. teenager) and was almost always talking on the telephone. (35. His) gran just said: "Take care!" and carried on (36. with) her knitting.

The availability and variability of text

1. What books are available in the classroom?
2. How many books are available?
3. Are there extra books provided by you?
4. Other than books, what texts are there available to the pupils?
5. Can the children bring their own books or other texts?

Showing the children what text and reading is

6. How much time every day or week is spent on reading?
7. When do you read during the day?
8. Are the children encouraged to read when they finish working on something?
9. How is the reading organised?
10. Is there a special reading corner in the classroom?
11. Do you read stories for the children?
12. Do the children have the opportunity to read or tell stories (in front of the whole class)?

Learners need to manage their own reading process, but the teacher will give them support and guidance in order to become independent readers

13. How do you prepare the children when they read a new text (prior knowledge)?
14. How do you encourage and motivate the children?
15. Do you manage the children's reading program or are they allowed to choose their own readings (or is it a shared activity to make choices)?

The learners are allowed to make mistakes, they learn from their mistakes.

16. Do the learners have the opportunity to read silently?

17. Do you correct them constantly when they make mistakes? Do they have to read everything perfect?

The teacher keeps progress records of the pupils to focus on the gaps in everyone's progress.

18. How do you evaluate the children? Group evaluations or individual?
19. Do you keep records of their progress?
20. Do you evaluate together with your pupils?

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APPENDIX 4**List of books**

Title	Author
Wart	Bonita Case
Children in Etosha	Jenny Davis
This fish, that fish	Christie de Villiers
The Comrades Marathon	Kelly, C.M.
Karabo's Accident	Frances Cross
The diary that got me in trouble	Julie Frederikse
Thami and Thandi	Frances Greathead
When elephant was king	Nick Greaves
Mafia and the aeroplane	Max Sed
Die Klein Prinsie	Saint-Exupery, Antoine (translated by Andre Brink)
Over the bridge	Isobell Randall
The TV mystery	Nomsa Radebe
Shadows	Harvey Chocal
Under the cotton tree	David Cobb
Dreaming of Freedom. The story of Robben Island	Berens Penny & Hutton Barbara
The paper kite	Nola Turkington
Beka's brilliant brain wave	Nola Turkington
Grandmother's stories	Nola Turkington
The friendly elephant	M. Preller
Daar's 'n spook in my kas!	M. Preller
The Snow-angel	Fransi Phillips
Isipho	E.J. Van Wyk
Ingwenya	E.J. Van Wyk
Muggs and Muffin	Nanette van Rooyen
The artist and Sipho's secret	Nola Turkington
Xhosa fireside tales	Nambulelo Makhuphula
Krotoa	Karen Press

Mimi	Louise Prinsloo
Moment of truth. A collection of poems	Rankoane Portia
Kosmaak is pret	Ramsbottom Margaret
Cooking is fun	Ramsbottom Margaret
Ric, Rags and Plum Duff	Brenda Munitick
Isong le Nkhono	Leshoai
Gardening is fun	Lynn Hurry
The biggest pizza	Gillian Arthur
Die hoed wat weggewaai het	Elizabeth Andrew
The monkey's heart, a folk tale	Lemon Bob
Love, David	Dianne Case
Marshmallows, monsters and mice	Wendy Hartmann
Malvalekkers, monsters en muis	Wendy Hartmann
The adventures of an otter	Steve Camp
Tulube	Mabuya
The Africa's cup	Mandla Maseko
The gun smugglers	Mandla Maseko
A spider in the library	Margaret Auerbach
Thozza's Story	Daphne Barnard
Play music	Beryl Bowie
Tales from the Bo-Kaap	Georgie Brown
Granny Sangoma	John Byrne
Kusi's red jeep	Carvalho
The magic butterfly	Nial Dufan
Ruth First	Don Pinnock
Sussie Seekoei speel speurder	Morgan Michaela
Sussie Seekoei red n' apie	Morgan Michaela
Ubheti oluncedo uhlangule	Morgan Michaela
Helpful Betty solves a mystery	Morgan Michaela
Ubheti oluncedo usombulula isishiqi	Morgan Michaela
Helpful Betty to the rescue	Morgan Michaela
The back to front warthog	Eileen Molver

Dema and Demazana	Kathleen Milne
Uvimba kaBenjamin	Reeve Lindbergh
The tortoise who cared	D. Jackson
Umorabaraba Kofi	Gillian Leggat
KTV all about South Africa	(ed.) Sean Fraser
Endangered wildlife of South Africa	John Comrie-Greig
The wild creatures of South Africa for children	Joy Frandsen
Guardian of the mountain	Eileen Molver
Nature in balance	Rob Marsh
Animal adventures	Jay Heale
My Drum 2	Meyerowitz Barbara
Thabile's dream	Patricia Shonstein Pinnoch
We shouldn't keep it	Ann Walton
Flight from Houtbay	Deborah Savage
So word n'boek gemaak	Meta Zollner
How a book is made	Meta Zollner
Mhudi	Plaatje Sol
Timothy and the taxi	Hilary Wilson
The wounded spear rises	Brian Williams
Die steenkoolster	Johan Volschenk
Snow white and the return of the Queen	Paul Venter
Looking back	CR de Wet van Wyk
Ripples in the pool	Lois Tennant
Flashes of adventure	Lois Tennant
The place of the sound and other stories	Lois Tennant
Dancing flames	Lois Tennant
Mandi the music maker	Dianne Stewart
The runaway hen	Dianne Stewart
The wishful walnut	Elsabe Steenberg, Alida Bothma
The leopard boy	Peter Slingsby
Nobody's cat	Jenny Seed

The big pumpkin	Jenny Seed
Rescue in the rain	Jenny Seed
Playabout ten one-act plays	Sue Scott
Troeteldiere	Catherine Robinson
The pet book	Catherine Robinson
Birds of Southern Africa	Richards Deirdre
Mammals of Southern Africa	Richards Deirdre
Soogdiere van Suider-Afrika	Richards Deirdre
Voels van Suider-Afrika	Richards Deirdre
Houtbay's big catch	Deborah Savage
Stories from a Shona childhood	Charles Mungoski
Petronella Parker and friends	Janice Mymin
My Drum South African poetry	Meyerowitz Barbara
Cry of the intaka	Phyllis Owen
Elkeen se paleis	Pieter Pieterse
Kom ons teken	Tienie Pitout
Nongqawuse's prophecy	Karen Press
Queen of the tortoises	Gcina Mhlope
Daar diep in die see	Hester Heese
As my kitaar kon praat	Jan Combrink
The dancing elephant	Javin McDonald
Ashraf of Africa	Ingrid Mennen, Niki Daly
The snake with seven heads	Gcina Mhlope
Struggle for the land	Candy Malherbe
Black as I am	Zindzi Mandela
Peter and the seven wonders of the ancient world	Marx Chris L.
Kitoti	Paula Maud
Captain Muddles and his wacky water wonders	Camp Steve
Namibia	Leon Bekker & Mark Van Aardt
The magic herbs	Ford Janis

Who's there?	Lesley Beake
Zizi and !Xau the eagle calls	Carvalho Carlos
The diary without a key	Frederikse Julie
To catch a thief	Alan Fundi
The nine headed monster	Dan Fulani
Dean men's bones	Dan Fulani
The kingdom above earth	Vicki Forrester
The Waterfront	Bickford-Smith Vivian
The Sunflower	Gill Bond
Athletics	Gerald Brown
Thabo saves a soccer star	Nola Turkington
The story-telling day	Lesley Beake
Z456 to the rescue	Lesley Beake
Desert hero	Lesley Beake
Stories South of the sun	Compiled by Bodenstein Christel & Hans & Rode Linda
Scaredy Scaredy	Mirna Laurence
Does your father snore?	Kathy Luckett
The Dala tree	Phyllis Owen
Merkwaardige Soogdiere	Parsons Alexandra
Merkwaardige Katte	Parsons Alexandra
Merkwaardige Spinnekoppe	Parsons Alexandra
Elektrisiteit	Parsons Alexandra
Treine	Parsons Alexandra
Oerwouddiere	Parsons Alexandra
O Aarde! Wat nou?	Nick Butterworth
Die drie klein wolfies en die rare vet vark	Eugene Triwizas
Sing Africa!	Shonstein Patricia
Oliver Tambo	Chris Van Wyk
Busisiwe goes to the graduation party	G. Strauss
The seafood adventure	Dianne Stewart

Joe Cassidy and the red hot chacha	Janet Smith
The present	E.J. Van Wyk
Bubblegum Bheki	E.J. Van Wyk
Sandile and the silver city	Adie Wagener
The world on a hill and other plays	Deep cuts
Kalinzu and the oxpeckers	Jeremy Grimsdell
Klein bobbejaan leer n'les	D. Jackson
The foolish baboon	D. Jackson
The life of plants	Attenborough David
Rantuu and the donkey thieves	Felicia Goosen
Prince Thabo's calling	Greg Doolan
Prince Thabo becomes a star	Greg Doolan
Prince Thabo's big test	Greg Doolan
Go Prince Thabo go	Greg Doolan
Professor Experimento's frightening formulas	Jane Oosthuysen
Contact	C.B. Peper
The price of a chicken	Pieter Pieterse
Who's afraid of spiders?	Brain Helen
The street detectives	Janis Ford
The poachers	Poulton Mike
"The little Wise One". African tales of the hare	Phyllis Savoy



READING QUESTIONNAIRE 2

Date _____

Name _____

1. What differences did you see in your classroom the last two weeks?

2. Did you like the 'mini library' in your classroom?
☐ Yes ☐ No

3. How many books did you read the last two weeks?
☐ 0-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ More than 15

4. How much time did you spend on reading every day in the last two weeks?
☐ 0-5 minutes
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16-20
☐ More than 20 minutes

5. When did you read?
☐ In the morning when I entered the classroom
☐ When I finished an activity
☐ During an activity
☐ _____

6. About the reading...
☐ I read books
☐ I read books and I looked at the pictures or the drawings
☐ I only looked at the pictures and I did not read everything

7. What kind of books did you read the last two weeks?

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Almost never
Comic books				
Soccer magazines				
Newspaper				
Tales				
Long stories				
Fashion				
Cooking				
Diary				
Poetry				
Biographies				
Theatre plays				
History				
Short stories				

8. Do you like reading?
☐ Yes ☐ No

9. In what language did you read most of the books the last two weeks?
☐ Afrikaans
☐ English
☐ Xhosa

10. Did you try to read books in another language?
☐ Yes ☐ No

11. In what language?
☐ Afrikaans
☐ English
☐ Xhosa

12. Where is your favourite spot to read in the classroom?
☐ Your desk
☐ Your friend's desk
☐ Mat
☐ _____

13. Write down the titles of the books that you read the last two weeks (if you remember)?

14. Did you like the story 'George's marvellous medicine'?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. What kind of books was missing in the little library, according to you?

ACTIVITIES

16. Give me (in your own words) a definition of a newspaper (what is a newspaper)?

17. Did you like the activity when you had to write a newspaper article?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. About what topic did you have to write?

19. Was it difficult?

☐ Yes ☐ No

20. Did you like to work in groups?

☐ Yes ☐ No

21. Did you work well together in your group?

☐ Yes ☐ No

22. Did you like to put the story about the hare together?

☐ Yes ☐ No

23. Was it difficult?

☐ Yes ☐ No

FAVOURITE BOOKS

24. How did you choose a book?

☐ I looked at the cover (if it is nice, I take the book)

☐ I read the summary at the back of the book

☐ I browsed through the book to see if I liked it

☐ I took a book that a friend read and he/she said it was nice

☐ _____

25. What is the title of your favourite book that you read the last two weeks?

26. Tell me in a few sentences the story of that book?

27. Explain why you liked that particular book?

Grade Six, I really need to thank all of you. Thank you very much for helping me to collect the information that I need in order to write my dissertation for the University. You did all very well! I wish you all the best for the coming term and the coming years. Keep on reading...go to the library...because reading is very important in your life!
THANK YOU! ENKOSI! BAIE DANKIE!

University of Cape Town

What language do you speak at home?

What language do you speak at school?

In what language do you prefer to read?

Do you read in other languages than the preferred language?

Where do you find those books in general?

What differences did you see in the classroom in September?

Did you enjoy the books that were available in the classroom?

What books do you think were still missing?

Did you read more books than usual?

Did you read books in other languages than you normally read?

Did you read books in your home language?

Did you read books in English?

What did you do when you had a problem while reading?

What do you do when do not understand what you are reading?

Do you like working in groups?

Do you like reading?

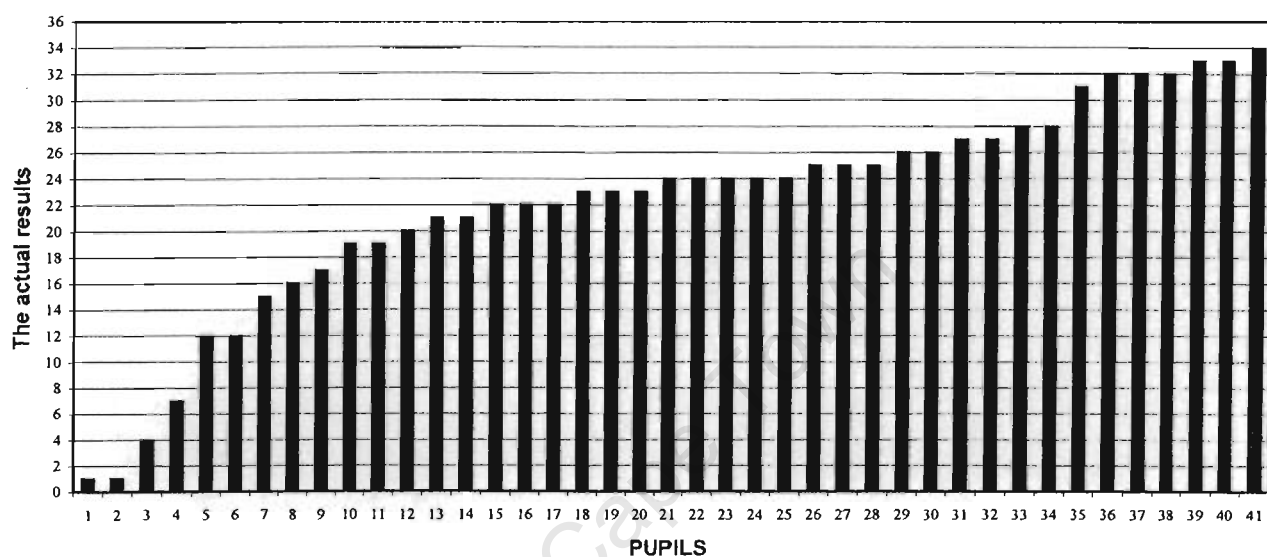
Do you ask other people to help you?

Who do you ask for help?

Did you like the activities that were organised (with the newspaper article/sequencing)?

What information did you use to write the article?

POST-TEST OCTOBER



The post-test results according to Rye's (1982) theory of interpretation

Level	Actual Results	Number of pupils
Frustration	0-7	4 (10%)
	8-14	2 (5%)
Instructional level	15-18	3 (7%)
	19-21	5 (12%)
Independent level	22-29	20 (49%)
	30-36	7 (17%)

APPENDIX 8

The original stories used in the “sequencing” activity

Story 1: “The waxen horns”

The waxen horns

1 Long, long ago all the animals of Africa were on friendly terms with one another. They made their own laws and rules, and from time to time they chose a king to guide them. At this particular time the elephant ruled as monarch
5 of the wilds, and his subjects willingly carried out his every wish.

One day, anxious to discuss a matter of importance and great privacy that concerned the antelopes, Elephant called a meeting of all the horned members of his kingdom. They
10 immediately made ready to attend.

Sunguru the Hare was hornless, of course. When he realised that he was not included in the summons, he was not only upset but also greatly annoyed. He was an inquisitive creature, and the more he thought about it, the more envious and disgruntled he became.

“I shall attend the meeting!” he grumbled as he sat with his chin in his paws in deep cogitation. “I must think of a plan to deceive the antelopes into believing that I am a member of their community.”

20 For two whole days Sunguru thought, and thought, and thought – until at last he sat up with a jerk, and a large grin replaced the frown that had puckered his face for so long.

He chortled as he skipped towards the forest and made his way to a deserted bees’ nest, which he remembered seeing
25 in an ant-bear hole not far away. He soon located it, separated the wax from the old honeycomb, and took the wax home.

With great skill he shaped the wax into a pair of elegant, shiny horns to wear on top of his head. Then he settled
30 down for the night with a sigh of contentment.

Early the next morning he moulded the waxen horns onto his head to fit securely between his neat little round ears. Then hoppity-skip he went down the path to the antelopes’ meeting place, smiling to himself and shaking his head from
35 time to time to test the firmness of his new head-dress.

“An excellent imitation,” he smirked. “Those foolish antelopes will never suspect that my horns are not real!”

There was a sharp nip in the early morning air as Sunguru set out from home, so the wax held firm and hard. But
40 as he neared the meeting place, the day promised to become hot.

Seeing many curious glances in his direction as he arrived, Sunguru lost no time in mingling with the crowd. He gave a sigh of relief. Thank goodness, he thought, none of
45 the animals has recognised me. Even the elephant’s vigilant eyes accepted him as one of the group. All went well for a while, and he heard many secrets that concerned the horned creatures.

But the hare had overlooked the fact that wax melts in the
50 midday heat – or perhaps he was unaware of it – and as the sun grew hotter, the waxen horns began to soften until at last they started to melt. Sunguru felt something wet trickling down the side of his face. He brushed it away impatiently, thinking that he was perspiring. But to his horror

55 he saw that there was molten wax on his paw.

He paled beneath his fur, and tried to find a corner in which to hide. But the antelopes had already noticed that his elegant horns were bending in the heat. They were too quick for him, and as the disguise collapsed on either side of
60 Sunguru’s head, the jostling crowd caught him and dragged him to their king, shouting, “Impostor! Spy!”

“Well,” said the elephant when he saw the hare’s treach-

ery, “if Sunguru wishes to wear ornaments on his head, I shall see that his wish is carried out. It will act as a reminder of his deceit for ever more!” He then ordered the
65 horned creatures each in turn to pull the hare’s ears with all their might.

This punishment was administered until Sunguru’s little round ears had stretched, and stretched, and stretched to
70 the length of the elegant waxen horns with which he had tried to deceive not only the antelopes, but his king as well. And to this very day the hare wears his long ears as a badge of his disgrace, and he is disliked and distrusted by all the horned animals around him.

Narrator: Gwido Mariko

Told by the Kikuyu of Mount Kenya, this tale with variations is also found in many other countries.

Story 2: "The Lion, the Hare and the fleas"

The lion, the hare and the fleas

1 In the long, long ago, when the world was very young and animals could talk, a lion was walking along a footpath one day when he saw one of Hare's children playing in the sunshine.

5 Now, the lion had had nothing to eat that day and he was hungry. So although Hare's child was very small, he caught and ate it because his stomach was empty.

10 The hare, being nearby, saw this happen. He was very angry with the lion and decided to punish him. But because the lion was so big and fierce and strong, and the hare so very small and weak, he could not go up to the lion and say, "Lion, why did you eat my child?" Surely the lion would then eat him too! He had to plan his revenge very carefully.

15 Although the hare was such a little fellow, he was renowned throughout the land for his cleverness. He thought for a long time how to get the better of the lion, until at last he hit upon a plan.

20 Now, he thought to himself, I must pretend to know nothing of the fact that he killed my child, and make him believe that I am his friend. And he smiled at his own ingenuity.

25 Some days passed before he saw the lion having his mid-day rest in the shade of a tree. He sidled up to him and bowed deeply, saying, "Good day, friend Lion! I see you have chosen an excellent resting place on this very hot day. Have you eaten well?"

"Yes, Hare, I have eaten well. I caught a fat bush-pig that will satisfy my needs for several days."

"And did you sleep well last night?"

30 "Yes, Hare, I slept well."

"But you would sleep much better if you did not have so many fleas in the brush of your tail! I can see them running about from where I stand."

35 "I know, Hare," replied the lion. "The fleas are a great bother to me, because my tail will not stay still while I try to catch them. They are such small creatures, and my paws are so large."

"Let me help you, friend," said the hare. "I'll hold your tail with one paw while I catch the fleas with the other."

40 "How good it is to have such a true friend!" smiled the lion as he settled down again to continue his nap, while the hare began to catch the fleas on the end of his tail.

45 It was not long before the lion, soothed by the hare combing through the hair on the end of his tail, fell into a deep sleep. With a chuckle of glee the hare, using a sharp-pointed stick that he had brought with him, began to dig a hole quite close to the root of the lion's tail.

50 When the hole was deep enough, the hare carefully put the lion's tail into it, and filled it again with the earth that he had dug out. Then he firmly stamped down the soil with the blunt end of his stick so that no matter how hard the lion pulled, he would not be able to free himself.

He poked the lion in the ribs and called, "Get up, Lion, and tell me who it is that eats children!"

55 The lion woke with a start and tried to jump up, but his tail was so firmly embedded in the hole that he fell back with a roar of pain. After much struggling he managed to sit up and tried to grab the hare, but he might have saved himself the trouble. The hare was well beyond his reach, 60 thoroughly enjoying the lion's discomfiture.

Roaring in rage, the lion realised that he was firmly trapped. He also knew that he could not expect any help from the animals around, for had he not, at some time or another, made a meal of at least one of their relations?
65 There was his mate, of course, but as he had refused to share the tasty bush-pig with her, she was sure to take her own revenge!

Story 3: "The Hare and his Mother"

The hare and his mother

1 Kalulu the Hare was a good son. He had supported his mother throughout the lean years that followed his father's death, but he was having more and more difficulty in finding sufficient food for the two of them. So he finally decided to look for work at the farm of a man who lived nearby.

5 The man was pleased to employ him because, having no sons, there was no one to herd his cattle. It became the hare's work to take the beasts out to pasture each day as soon as the dew was off the grass. When the cows had been milked, Kalulu was given a calabash of milk for his breakfast, and another one when he returned in the evening. His morning ration he took to the grazing lands with him.

10 One day the man said, "Hare, why is it that you do not drink your milk before you leave each day? Who are you feeding on my food?"

15 "In the early hours of the day I do not need food," Kalulu replied. "I prefer to drink it when the sun is hot, and the beasts are resting under the trees."

20 The hare, however, had his own reason for taking the milk to the pastures each day. When he reached a big tree along the way, he stopped and, tapping the trunk lightly, called, "Mother, Mother, come out! It is your son with your food."

25 Then his mother would come to the opening and embrace him. She would pour some of the milk into her own calabash before returning to her underground refuge, and was always very grateful to her son for his care.

30 The man became more and more suspicious as the days passed and the hare continued to take his breakfast with him each day. So he decided to spy on him, to see if he spoke the truth.

One morning the man followed at a distance and, sure enough, as Kalulu reached the tree he saw him tap it and heard him call, "Mother, Mother, it is your son bringing you food."

35 The man went back to his hut, picked up a bag, slung it over his shoulder and returned to the tree. Three times he tapped the trunk and called in a small and squeaky voice, "Mother, Mother, it is your son bringing you more food."

40 The old hare came to the opening, and was immediately seized and put into the bag. Then the man hurried home with his catch.

45 The following day when Kalulu took the cattle out to graze, he tapped on the tree and called his mother as usual, but there was no reply. For three days the same thing happened and in great sorrow he concluded that a jackal must have eaten her.

On the fourth day the man said, "Hare, carry this bag for me. I have a present to take to my father-in-law." And he handed the bag to the hare.

50 They had travelled some distance along the road to the father-in-law's home when a honey-bird called from a tree nearby, and the man said, "Hare, go with that bird and bring me some honey, then follow after me."

55 The bird led the hare to a hollow tree, and the contented hum of the bees inside showed that there was a great deal of honey. So the hare took the axe from his belt, and put down his bag next to a bush before he began to chop. It did not take him long to reach the nest, and after a good feed of the delicious honey he broke off a big piece of comb for the man and turned to pick up the bag.

But something was struggling inside the bag and a voice called out, "Oh, untie me! Untie me!"

Kalulu opened the bag. To his great surprise and joy, out jumped his mother. "So that is how the man repays me for all my hard work!" he exclaimed as he embraced her. "I shall punish him for this." Filling the bag with angry bees, he tied it up again and hastened after the man.

65 By the time Kalulu caught up with him, the man had reached his father-in-law's hut and was inside greeting the old man. "Bring me the bag and the honey, Hare," he called, "and shut the door so that we are not disturbed."

70 Kalulu lost no time in following the man's instructions. Then he put a heavy pole against the door so that it could not be opened from the inside. With his ear to the door he waited.

75 Presently there were shouts and screams from inside as the bees, angry at their rough handling, swarmed out when the bag was untied. "Open the door! Open the door! Oh, the bees! Hurry, they are killing us!" the man and his father-in-law and their family shouted.

80 The screams continued, but the hare did not wait to see the outcome. He hurried back to find his mother and took her to live with him very far away from the man who had been his master.

It often occurs in African folktales that animals, particularly the hare, are forced by humans to work for them, conversing with their masters. In this story bees are again used to punish cruelty or to take revenge. It is a favourite motif found in different forms in many tales.

Story 4: "The Hare, the Hippopotamus and the Fire"

The hare, the hippopotamus and the fire

1 The hare and the hippopotamus were great friends. They walked together in the veld and visited each other in their homes. The hippopotamus was very proud of his hut on the edge of the forest, and every day he gathered soft dry grass to add to the comfort of his very large bed, for he was a very large creature.

5 He was also quite vain, for he had a beautiful coat of hair which kept him warm throughout the winter months.

10 Then it happened that one day, while on a walk together, the hippopotamus - who was as clumsy as he was large - pushed the hare against a tree, hurting him badly. Not realising what he had done, the hippopotamus walked on, taking no notice of the hare's cries of pain.

15 The hare was very angry at such apparent heartlessness. For a long while he nursed his anger, during which time he planned to punish his friend for his carelessness.

Some time later he again visited the hippopotamus. The hippo was delighted to see him, and soon their conversation was running smoothly as of old.

20 "My friend," said the hare, following a lull in the conversation, "why is it that Fire, although professing great friendship towards you, does not return the many visits you have paid him? Surely it is right that you should return his past hospitality! Or is it that his friendship is not as great as he would have you believe?"

25 "No, Hare," replied the hippo, "his friendship is indeed a true one. We always find great enjoyment in each other's company."

30 "Then, friend Hippo, to test his fondness for you, let him know that you are deeply hurt at his neglect."

The hippopotamus was silent for a while as doubts began to creep into his mind. Then he said, "Well, maybe you are right, friend Hare, for many times have I accepted hospitality from Fire. Yet never once has he given me the opportunity of returning it in my own home. I shall speak to him about it."

35 Having had the seeds of doubt so successfully sown in his mind, the hippopotamus lost no time in calling on Fire. The hare did not accompany him, complaining of toothache.

40 "Good day to you, Fire," said the hippopotamus. "Do I find you well?"

"Good day to you," replied the fire. "It is a long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you. Have you been ill that you have not visited me for so long?"

45 "Not ill, Fire," replied the hippopotamus, "but I have been greatly grieved that you have never returned my friendship by visiting me."

"Dear friend," said the fire, "to do so would give me pleasure, but it would cause you nothing but distress. All creatures fear me when I leave my home, and you would fear me too."

50 "But, good Fire, that would be impossible, considering our long-standing friendship. I have complete trust in you. Please visit my home. If you fail to do so, I shall know that there has been but little truth in your professed friendship for me."

55 As the hippopotamus refused to listen to his protestations, the fire eventually said, "Very well, tomorrow at midday I shall visit you."

60 The hippopotamus was delighted.

The following day he was preparing for his guest's arrival when he heard a crackling noise outside. He looked out at

the doorway of his hut to see a big black cloud approaching, and many birds and animals running towards him in panic.

65 "My friend is on his way!" thought the hippopotamus joyfully. But his joy turned to fear as the fire entered his hut with a roar and a hiss. Then he felt searing flames envelop him as the tinder dry grass that was his bed caught alight. He raced from the hut like a ball of fire, and into the river.

70 He plunged to cool his burning skin. Not a hair was left on his big bare body - and so it has remained ever since.

The hippopotamus never went back to his home on the edge of the forest, but has lived in rivers and lakes from that day on, too afraid of meeting Fire again. And he never ventures out of the water in daytime, leaving it only at night to eat the grass at the water's edge.

This tale of revenge is peculiar to the Tongas of Southern Zambia.

Story 5: "The Hare and the Warthog"

The hare and the warthog

1 The hare was full of happiness one morning as the sun rose over the hills, and he tripped along the path to gather pumpkins from his lands nearby. Were not his children the most beautiful in the land? And certainly he had reason to
5 be proud of his flocks of sheep and goats. His crops, too, were all that could be desired. Yes, life was indeed good.

He was so preoccupied thinking about his possessions that he failed to watch the path, and suddenly he was wrenched up into the air. There he hung by a leg from a
10 short rope attached to a long sapling, which had been

driven into the ground — he had put his foot into a trap that had been cunningly hidden in the path.

"Oh, oh, oh!" he shrieked. "Help! Please, dear friends, come and cut me down. Oh, help, help!"

15 It was unfortunate for the hare that not a single friend was within earshot, nor did any pass that way throughout the day. But it was fortunate indeed that the man who had set the trap happened to be spending the day at a nearby village, where a beer party was taking place, and had forgotten
20 all about the snare.

The hours passed slowly, and the hare wept bitterly as he thought of his dear wife, his children, and his beautiful flocks of sheep and goats, which he would never see again.

It was late in the afternoon when he saw a warthog trotting along the path towards him, tail in the air and full of importance. Here was help at last, thought the hare, and he was about to call out when the warthog saw him.

30 "Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the heartless creature. "Is it not the Wise One I see hanging by his leg in such an undignified manner? Oh, this is too funny! Ho, ho, ho!"

The hare suppressed his anger at the warthog's laughter and unkind words and said, "Dear friend Warthog, please release me. When the owner of this trap finds me, he will kill me because of all the mealies I have taken from his
35 garden."

The warthog continued to laugh at the hare's misfortune so the hare said, "Please, good friend, if you are not willing to help me, then at least call my friends to cut me down."

40 However, instead of calling the hare's friends, the warthog called his family, who joined in making fun of the unfortunate hare. Realising that he could expect no help from the hard-hearted warthog family, the hare said no more.

Presently the warthog's curiosity got the better of him. He had heard of these traps but had never seen one, so he decided to find out how they worked. "Hare," he said, "tell me, how is it that you hang there, upside down? I cannot understand how the pole got you there." And he went up to the pole to examine it.

45 "This would make an excellent rubbing post," he continued, and he proceeded to rub the itchy spot on his back against the pole. But the warthog was big and heavy, and the pole was light and bendy, so it soon fell down.

The hare lost no time in untying the rope that held him. Once free, he began to curse the warthog, calling him every
50 bad name he could think of because he had refused to help a friend in need, as is the law of the wild.

This made the warthog very angry. He was a bully and not fond of criticism, but in his heart he knew that he had behaved badly. He had no intention of admitting this, however, so he chased the hare, hoping to kill him with his sharp tusks. The wily hare dodged from side to side as he ran, and because the warthog was big and clumsy he fell further and further behind — but still he continued the chase.
60

65 The crafty hare knew of a game-pit next to a reed fence at the edge of a mealie patch which belonged to a nearby village, and this was where he led the chase.

When he came to the trap, he skipped over it, knowing that his light weight would not break the twigs that covered
70 the deep hole underneath.

The warthog, however, being big and heavy, broke the twigs when he trod on them. He fell into the pit and onto a spike that had been set upright at the bottom. It pierced his stomach, causing him such an injury and so much pain that
75 he died before sunset.

The hare ran on, laughing to himself. And the village people enjoyed a feast of roast warthog on the following day.

As can be seen from this folktale, animals were often regarded as having human attributes, including human habitations, huts and villages, keeping and treasuring herds of cattle and goats, and talking as human beings do.

Story 6: "The Hyena, the Goat and the Leopard"

The hyena, the goat, the leopard and the hare

The hyena's home was near a river, and he owned a little canoe of which he was exceedingly proud. Most hyenas are very greedy and this one was no exception. He also happened to be very hungry, for he had not eaten for several days. So early in the morning he climbed into his canoe and paddled across the river to see what he could find on the other side. Like the rest of his family, he was a thief and seldom made his living by honest means.

He dragged the canoe into the reeds next to the river and tied it securely. Then he went in search of something to eat. Before long he came to a little footpath that led towards a forest. After following it for some time, he came to a village. He approached it stealthily, because he was a coward as well as a thief. To his joy he found it deserted, the occupants being away at a beer drinking party.

"I am indeed fortunate," he said, pushing open the door of a hut. Inside he found a large basket of meal, and rubbed his paws together with joy. "This will provide many meals for me," he chuckled as he dragged it outside.

He then went to the next hut, where he broke down the door and found a goat tethered to the centre pole. This he took, and tied it to the basket of meal before exploring the contents of the third hut. In it he found a leopard, also tied up, and he added it to the goat and the basket of meal. He picked up the basket and, dragging the goat and the leopard after him, hastened back to the place where he had left his canoe.

But once there his troubles began. The canoe was so small that he could carry only two of his new acquisitions at a time. How could he get all his booty over safely?

If he were to take the two animals over on the first trip and then return for the basket of meal, surely the leopard would eat the goat! Should he take the leopard over first, then without doubt the goat would eat the meal! This was a matter far too complicated for the dim-witted hyena to work out.

He was sitting woefully on the river bank, wondering what to do, when Kalulu the Hare sauntered by.

"Good day to you, my friend," the hare said. "What is troubling you, that you look so miserable?"

"Oh, Kalulu," replied the hyena, "I am greatly puzzled as to how to get my three purchases over the river, for my canoe is too small to take everything over at the same time. If I take the goat and the leopard first, surely the leopard will eat the goat while I return for the meal! And if I take the goat and the meal over together, the goat will eat the meal while I return for the leopard. Kalulu, I am greatly perplexed!"

Kalulu never failed to turn the problems of others to his own advantage, so after a moment's thought he said, "Why, Hyena my friend, that is easy. First you must take over the goat and the leopard. But bring back the leopard with you when you return for the meal. In that way both the goat and the meal will be safe."

"What a true friend you are, Kalulu," said the hyena gratefully, and at once followed the hare's advice. He took the goat and the leopard over on the first trip, and brought back the leopard on his return to fetch the meal.

But while he was away, Kalulu filled a bag that he carried over his shoulder with meal from the hyena's basket. He was strolling away when the hyena returned and exclaimed, "Oh, Kalulu, a thief has stolen half my meal!"

"No," answered Kalulu, "it was not a thief who took your meal. I took it as payment for the excellent advice I gave you just now. Surely you must admit that this is only just and fair!"

And with a low bow he continued on his way, leaving the hyena to ponder on the ways of justice.